$3.75

October 1993
Number 36

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

When the Court Should Not Be Obeyed
Russell Hittinger

How the World Lost Its Story
Robert W. Jenson

King Lear Beyond Reason
Mark R. Schwehn

Evangelizing Liberalism
M. B. Handspicker

Evangelical Theology in Crisis
Edward T. Oakes

Opinions and Reviews: Crime and the Cure of the Soul
The Battle Hymn of the Republic, Corrected
Recruiting for the Gay Revolution • John P. Sisk
Mark Gerson • Amity Shlaes • George Weigel

0 73361 64655 2 10

Richard John Neuhaus

The Public Square

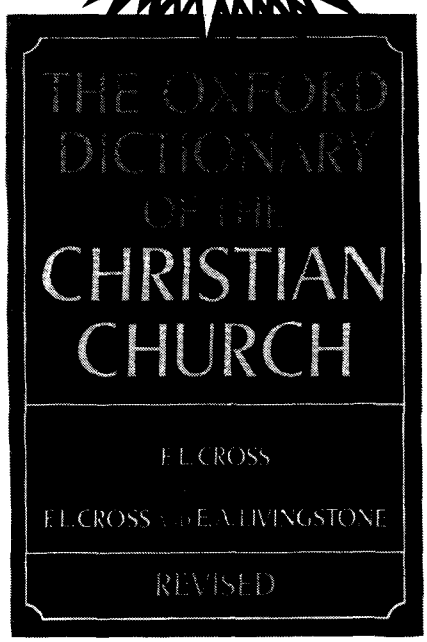
A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Quite simply: the finest one-volume Christian reference in the English-speaking world

"Indispensable" . . . "has no peer" . . . "the single most useful reference book for Christianity" — a few of the accolades for this magisterial work

$65 in stores — yours FREE



Nothing of Christian interest is absent from these pages. The sweep is awesome:

The history of the Church ★ doctrines ★ denominations ★ short biographies of some 4,500 eminent Christians: models of accuracy and objectivity ★ the books of the Bible and their backgrounds ★ resumes of the notable Christian writings ★ feasts ★ summaries of the teachings of theologians and philosophers: again, models of objectivity and compression ★ the works of Christian artists, sculptors and composers ★ accounts of non-Christian religions ★ descriptions of cathedrals ★ significant findings in archaeology and textual criticism ★ in fact, virtually anything or anybody with a bearing on 2,000 years of Christianity

When you seek information on matters Christian, the unabridged dictionary is skimpy or, more often, silent. Likewise the encyclopedias. The usual Christian reference works (many of them excellent) naturally focus on subjects of mostly denominational interest. Nothing approaches this volume in scope and depth.

The critics agree. Praise for the First Edition

"There is no other similar reference book so comprehensive, balanced, accurate and informative."—*Kirkus Reviews*

"A fit newcomer to the ranks of the great Oxford books. Read it through, one entry a day, and it will take eighteen years from Aaron to Zwingli, and, should you remember what you have read, which is improbable, you will know when you reach Zwingli as much as an archangel about the Church and many other matters."—Rose Macaulay, [London] *Times Literary Supplement*

"Unbiased in his treatment of Catholic subjects."—*Catholic World*

"It is certainly a book that no clergyman or library or, indeed, any reader with even a casual interest in matters historical or religious should be without."—*New York Times*

. . . and for this Second Revised Edition

"Still the single most useful reference book for Christianity in general."—*Anglican Theological Review*

"A first place to go for clear and precise information."—*Presbyterian Outlook*

"Has no peer as a one-volume encyclopedia."—*The Review & Expositor*

"This new edition is even better! I advise anyone who has an interest in the history and theology of the Christian Church to purchase it and keep it so close to his desk that he will consult it frequently."—*Currents in Theology & Mission*

- Some 6,300 entries, including cross-references
- 251 learned contributors
- Extensive bibliographies
- A giant: 1,551 pages in the generous 6½ x 9½ size

How to get this $65 reference FREE

How the Club Works

Every 4 weeks (13 times a year) you get a free copy of the Club Bulletin which offers you the Featured Selection plus a good choice of Alternates — all of interest to conservatives. ★ If you want the Featured Selection, do nothing, it will come automatically. ★ If you don't want the Featured Selection, or you do want an Alternate, indicate your wishes on the handy card enclosed with your Bulletin and return it by the deadline date. ★ The majority of Club books will be offered at 20-50% discounts, plus a charge for shipping and handling. ★ As soon as you buy and pay for 4 books at regular Club prices, your membership may be ended at any time, either by you or by the Club. ★ If you ever receive a Featured Selection without having had 10 days to decide if you want it, you may return it at Club expense for full credit. ★ Good service. No computers! ★ The Club will offer regular Superbargains, mostly at 70-90% discounts plus shipping and handling. Superbargains do NOT count toward fulfilling your Club obligation, but do enable you to buy fine books at giveaway prices. ★ Only one membership per household.

CONSERVATIVE BOOK CLUB

15 OAKLAND AVENUE • HARRISON, N.Y. 10528

Please accept my membership in the Club and send FREE my copy of *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.* I agree to buy 4 additional books at regular Club prices over the next 2 years. I also agree to the Club rules spelled out in this coupon.

FT-34

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

OCTOBER 1993 • NUMBER 36

CORRESPONDENCE 2 *Leon O. Billig, David E. Sparks, Jonathan Wells, Sidney Reiners, Bob Fritter, Robert Ditmars, Tom Humble, Kenneth L. Kreuz, T. Ross Valentine, Robert C. Whitten, Jr., Virginia A. Heffernan, Miles Hawthorne, Bruce T. Dahlberg, Robert N. Mateer, Russell L. Meyer, Helen Hull Hitchcock, Chadron R. Orton, Francis X. Maier*

OPINION 8 *Charles Colson* Crime and the Cure of the Soul
Paul V. Mankowski The Battle Hymn of the Republic, Corrected

ARTICLES 12 *Russell Hittinger* When the Court Should Not Be Obeyed

19 *Robert W. Jenson* How the World Lost Its Story

25 *Mark R. Schwehn* King Lear Beyond Reason: Love and Justice in the Family

34 *M. B. Handspicker* Evangelizing Liberalism

REVIEW ESSAY 38 *Edward T. Oakes* Evangelical Theology in Crisis

BOOKS 45 *John P. Sisk* Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America by Robert Hughes; *Mark Gerson* The Neoconservative Mind by Gary Dorrien; *Amity Shlaes* Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America by William B. Helmreich; *George Weigel* God's Politician: John Paul II, the Catholic Church, and the New World Order by David Willey; Briefly Noted

THE PUBLIC SQUARE 60 A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life by *Richard John Neuhaus*
This Month: Recruiting for the Revolution, etc.

Poetry by *Travis DuPriest* (10), *Robert Siegel* (33), *Elizabeth Creamer* (59), *Katherine Soniat* (71)

Editor-in-Chief: *Richard John Neuhaus*
Editor: *James Nuechterlein*
Managing Editor: *Matthew Berke*
Poetry Editor: *Jill P. Baumgaertner*
Publisher: *Institute on Religion and Public Life*
Publishing Service: *Publishing Management Associates*

FIRST THINGS: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life (ISSN #1047-5141) is published monthly (except for combined issues June/July and August/September) for $24 per year by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: send address changes to FIRST THINGS, P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. **Editorial Offices:** The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. **Editorial Phone:** (212) 627-1985. **Advertising Offices:** 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. **Advertising Phone:** (815) 398-8569. **Subscription Department:** P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. 1-800-875-2997. Unsolicited material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior Street, Sandusky, OH 44870. Copyright © 1993 by The Institute on Religion and Public Life. All rights reserved. Produced in the USA.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS

FIRST THINGS is published by Religion and Public Life, an interreligious, nonpartisan research and education institute whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society. RPL also sponsors scholars conferences, consultations, research projects, public educational events, and a fellows program.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Peter Berger
Midge Decter
Stanley Hauerwas
Gertrude Himmelfarb
David Novak
Michael Novak
George Weigel

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Hadley Arkes
Walter Berns
Brigitte Berger
James Burtchaell
David Dalin
Thomas Derr
Jean Bethke Elshtain
James Finn
Ernest Fortin
Suzanne Garment
Mary Ann Glendon
Bruce Hafen
Carl F. H. Henry
Russell Hittinger
Leonid Kishkovsky
Christopher Lasch
Glenn Loury
George Marsden
Max Stackhouse

Correspondence

Christianity and Darwinism

The debate between Howard J. Van Till and Phillip E. Johnson ("God and Evolution: An Exchange," June/July) sounds a lot like an argument about the number of angels that can dance on the head of a pin. Unless one is a hopeless solipsist, the universe exists. And if it exists, it either came spontaneously into existence or it was created; there can be no third explanation. All the theories of a spontaneous universe I've ever heard of are, from a scientific standpoint, sheer nonsense, fit only to titillate credulous liberal arts intellectuals determined to believe that the world revolves around their navels. There are, to be sure, physical scientists who are atheists, but scarcely because of discoveries made in the study of the universe. Rather, they frantically search the universe seeking empirical justification for their atheism.

If, on the other hand, the universe was created, the evidence points to a Creator of enormous power and considerable insight. Why would such a being bother to share the details of creation with the created, especially since these details likely are beyond human understanding and might even be used to frustrate the intent of the Creator? Under the circumstances, it seems to me that speculation that can never be rigorously tested is pointless, since no conclusions can be drawn from it.

As Tolstoy pointed out, "The combination of causes of phenomena is beyond the grasp of human intellect. But the impulse to seek causes is innate in the soul of man." So let people, believers and unbelievers alike, seek the causes of phenomena if they will. And when they come up with theories of how the Creator went about His task, believers can shrug and say, "Perhaps, but can you prove it? And what difference does it make anyway?"

Leon O. Billig
Seattle, WA

Why is Howard Van Till so eager to gainsay Phillip Johnson?

One would think that these two thoughtful opponents of neo-Darwinism would be in the same camp. They might not see eye to eye about many things, but their solidarity before the common enemy ought to bring them together. To the eye of an outside observer, there is a tinge of chauvinism in Van Till's attack, a transparent defense of territory. Especially against those . . . those . . . *lawyers!* . . .

But what about the substance of Van Till's remarks? Attending to his analysis and exegesis of St. Basil and St. Augustine, one has the eerie feeling of encountering something heard before. Underneath the very convincing arguments about Creation being endowed from the beginning with the powers to develop, there is a familiar framework of Creator-Universe relations. It is the same framework used by the metaphysical naturalist. It is the Paradigm of the Detached (Absent) Creator. God made the world. And God is now sitting there on the third row, aisle watching it unfold (Detached). Or, for the Darwinist, God didn't have anything to do with it (Absent).

Is this the best defense of the theistic position: to adopt the analytical framework of the Darwinists to combat the Darwinists? . . . I would like to suggest that there is another paradigm that could defeat them: the Paradigm of the *Un*detached Creator. . . .

Creation is not a singular event that happened in the past. It is an ongoing process. Every particle, every electron, every atom, every molecule, every cell, every structure in the universe is held in existence—now, right now—by a specific act of the Creator. And that creative act has been going on during the whole history of the universe. One can speculate about whether God is, in this paradigm, immanent in His creation, or whether He is outside it, holding it up (or both). But the intention of this view is that He is and always has been present, continuously. . . .

Theistic naturalism must, it seems to me, give up the paradigm of the Detached (Absent) Creator and stop

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trying to prove the existence of a directed universe by prior creative endowment. The Creator hasn't stopped His activity. In fact, to suggest that He, who exists in eternity, has made only one impact on the vector of time, His own creation, is to place a limitation on the Limitless.

David E. Sparks
South Bend, IN

I congratulate Howard Van Till for aiming his discussion of Christianity and Darwinism above the level of biblical fundamentalism. As a theologian, I know that belief in the literal chronology of Genesis has never been central to Christian theology, played almost no role in the nineteenth-century debates over Darwin's theory, and has become prominent only since the rise of American creationism in the 1960s. Young-earth "creation-science" is thus not only unscientific but also unrepresentative of the Christian tradition.

Van Till proposes to reconcile Christianity and Darwinism on the basis of what he calls "the forgotten doctrine of the Creation's functional integrity." This doctrine, however, is also unrepresentative of the Christian tradition. Furthermore, Van Till's proposal fails to address a deeper conflict between Christian theology and Darwinian evolution.

Relying on Basil's *Hexaemeron* and Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*, Van Till claims that traditional Christian theology regarded the creation as functionally autonomous once it had been created by God. It is unlikely, however, that either Basil or Augustine would have agreed with this interpretation of their views. True, they advocated a temporal unfolding of creation that is probably consistent with evolution, broadly construed. But like all mainstream Christian theologians (at least through the Reformation), Basil and Augustine also affirmed a doctrine of providence whereby God continually sustains, oversees, and actively guides creation. The "functional integrity" described by Van Till owes more to eighteenth-century deism than to traditional Christian theism.

Even if Van Till's doctrine could be found in Basil and Augustine, however, it would still fail to address the more important issue of *design*. According to Christian doctrine, God created purposefully, and intended from the beginning to crown the creation with human beings made in the divine image. This affirmation is even more central to Christian theology than the doctrine of providence, since it follows directly from the doctrines of God and the incarnation.

Darwinian evolution excludes this affirmation. Human beings, as the last product of an essentially random process, can in no rational sense be regarded as designed. Darwin made this quite clear in his protracted debate with Asa Gray, who had attempted to put a teleological spin on Darwin's theory. Although Darwin acknowledged that life might originally have been "breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one," he was convinced that his theory excluded designed results.

The problem is not the argument for God's existence *from* design (which played almost no role in Christian theology until the eighteenth century), but an argument *to* design. For most Christians, design is a conclusion rather than a premise: as John Henry Newman wrote, "I believe in design because I believe in God; not in a God because I see design."

In the argument *from* design, denial of design removes a premise but in no way challenges the belief that God exists; in the argument *to* design, however, Darwin's exclusion of designed results is (for a Christian) tantamount to atheism. . . .

So even if it could be shown that Van Till's doctrine of functional integrity were Christian, and therefore (by implication) that some form of naturalistic evolution could be rationally held by Christians, this would fall far short of showing that Darwin's anti-teleological theory of evolution is compatible with Christian theology. The two viewpoints can be regarded as compatible only if one takes Darwinism to mean something other than Charles Darwin's theory, or Christianity to mean something other than the mainstream theological tradition through the Reformation.

Jonathan Wells
Fairfield, CA

. . . Professor Van Till, regarding Basil and Augustine, says, "Since their day . . . we have learned . . . that the spontaneous generation concept of that time fails to be viable." How so? Only for its suddenness, I assume, for if "the array of structures and life-forms now present was not present at the beginning, but became actualized in the course of time as the created substances . . . functioned . . . to bring about what the Creator . . . intended from the onset," empirically speaking the result is spontaneous generation.

Second, regarding the "God of the gaps" (a meaningless term of ridicule), Van Till says, "Johnson . . . tends to employ the . . . rhetorical strategy of treating the absence of evidence as if it were evidence for the absence of full genealogical continuity." What, pray, constitutes evidence of discontinuity if not the absence of evidence of continuity?

I am reminded of Carl Sagan's logic in a remark in his book *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*: "Design? Absolutely—without question. Designer? Not a hint."

Sidney Reiners
Grand Rapids, MN

In his article, Phillip E. Johnson states, "The fossil record is notoriously inconsistent with the Darwinian model of continuous change in tiny increments."

The research of well-known academics Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould affirmed this view so firmly that they developed the theory of punctuated equilibrium in 1972. They conclude that not only do species remain stable for millions of years, but when there is a change, it occurs relatively rapidly and the new life-forms are often radically different.

Johnson later states, "What actually did cause such a vast transformation remains utterly mysterious, as far as anyone can determine from scientific evidence." Without intending

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it, Gould and Eldredge have allowed even less time than traditional Darwinism for random-chance mutation to bring about today's complexity of life forms. Was random chance manipulating those genes? Or was God? Skeptical scientists have faith in the former. Believers have faith in the latter.

Johnson is right; in either instance—we're talking religion.

Bob Fritter
Lombard, IL

I write to commend Professor Phillip Johnson on his part in "God and Evolution: An Exchange." His rebuttal was lucid, penetrating, and gentlemanly. As he suggests, science, as practiced by those under the influence of evolutionary beliefs, is devolving into something akin to superstition. . . . To maintain their evolutionary belief system, the scientific establishment has to ignore such empirical data as the incompatibility of the Second Law of Thermodynamics (entropy) with the supposed evolution of complex organisms and the absence of transitional forms in the fossil record. The radioactive dating methods, which provided the long time periods so desperately needed to cover the lack of current and observable evidence, have themselves fallen into disrepute because of their assumptive basis and inconsistent results.

The quality of science is deteriorating to an extent apparent even to laymen. . . . We have the pathetic sight of Big Bang proponents trumpeting infinitesimal variations in background radiation temperature, measurements that an engineer on the project confided were well within instrument error.

It's as if Western scientists have willingly enslaved themselves to essentially the same materialistic orthodoxy that stifled Soviet science. But instead of Lenin, it's Darwin that they keep pumping full of formaldehyde. . . .

Robert Ditmars
Mt. Vernon, OH

To a great many of us sitting in the bleachers, the differences between Phillip E. Johnson and Howard J. Van Till appear to be about the degree to which the revealed Word of God is to be viewed in the uncertain and flickering light of the adduced word of material evolutionism: Van Till being a bit further into the evolutionism camp than Johnson. . . .

It seems not to have occurred to them that they are both being heavily influenced by the ubiquity of evolutionism in science. Instead of trying to interpret Scripture to accommodate the latest fad in evolutionism . . . it would no doubt be more fruitful to go at it the other way around: review science in the light of Scripture.

There is less conflict between Scripture and science (unencumbered by evolutionism) than there is between science and *any* doctrine of evolutionism, materialistic *or* theistic. . . .

Tom Humble
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Since random mutation is an anchoring feature of evolution theory, the term "random" deserves more scrutiny than it was given in the Van Till-Johnson exchange. In the sense that a random event is uncontrollable and unpredictable, it may be said to lie outside the realm of physical science, i.e., it is a metaphysical phenomenon. So, also, the "blind watchmaker" is a metaphysical concept, although Darwinian theorists might be miffed at the idea. In truth, however, the term "random" is only *pseudo*-metaphysical. If one grants modern science its premise that all physical reality is in principle accessible by empirical investigation and inductive logic, then randomness is merely *perceived as such* because of incomplete understanding of the system under observation. There appears to be no a priori reason why sufficient study of the gene and its environment would not ultimately lead to the predictability of mutation, just as understanding the mechanics of coin-flipping removes the randomness of the flip. From their standpoint, theists believe that such further study will put us back on the creation-by-God path.

The scientist, for his part, has a solemn responsibility for further study. The credibility which science has attained in our modern culture has made the scientist hostage to a Faustian bargain: he must ever keep looking for replacements for his conclusion, no matter how treasured. This is especially true for the present subject. One who rests his case on randomness as a central cause of creation is not qualitatively far different from the believer in "spontaneous generation" in Augustine's time.

Kenneth L. Kreuz
Cold Spring, NY

Having reread Phillip E. Johnson's "Creator or Blind Watchmaker?" (January) as well as his exchange with Howard J. Van Till, I found myself full of questions. Professor Van Till laments that the effect of Professor Johnson's pronouncements is to ensure "that the gulf between the academy and the sanctuary will only grow wider." Does he not realize that amongst those Professor Johnson labels "the reigning scientific and educational authorities," scientism prevails and that there is an irreconcilable difference between those who embrace scientism and theists? Of course, the gulf is the fault of both sides: scientists who proudly and arrogantly think science can provide the "theory of everything," disdainfully dismissing the immaterial realm, and those who adamantly adhere to *their* interpretation of Divine Revelation (e.g., biblical literalists) and refuse to accept scientific evidence, grasping at any weakness (such as gaps in evidence) in the scientific position. Does Professor Johnson not realize that by relying on weaknesses in the scientific theory to support his own beliefs, he leaves himself vulnerable to subsequent scientific discoveries?

To know *how* God created would require knowing the mind of God. Despite Professor Johnson's claim that "the inquiring mind of man was created in God's image," the *whole* of man is created in God's image. Nevertheless, we finite creatures are not able to grasp the Infinite. Attempting to do so is a chasing after the wind; it is vanity. The theist knows science

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cannot know the mind of God; the materialist remains ignorant.

T. Ross Valentine
Plano, Illinois

The implied support by Howard J. Van Till for "contemporary scientific theorizing" seems to be quite insupportable because scientific theory without experimental fact to back it up is conjecture. Evidence for the slow and continuous evolution proposed by Charles Darwin does not exist. Moreover, because a Darwinian mechanism must involve systems that are very close to thermodynamic equilibrium in some sense, increasing complexity in a Darwinian system, i.e., attaining higher degrees of order, flies in the face of the second law of thermodynamics. Systems near equilibrium always tend to degrade to states of lower order. Systems far from equilibrium, however, may become more ordered (or they may become "chaotic"). The ability of theorists to handle nonequilibrium systems is very limited because of the analytic intractability of the equations that describe the systems and because of extreme sensitivity to the initial conditions of the systems as well as *fluctuations* (can God be at work here?) in the states of the systems. Almost unquestionably, all of the complexities of "chaos" and nonequilibrium are of overwhelming importance in the evolutionary process. Because of this complexity we may never learn the evolutionary patterns or how they took place. The evolutionary problem is very similar to trying to predict the weather—easy until instabilities occur and then very unreliable to impossible. Darwinian evolution is most certainly wrong, at least scientifically, and we should stop claiming to the public that it is right. It is myth!

Robert C. Whitten, Jr.
Cupertino, CA

Inappropriate Humor?

I was particularly unhappy with Jean Bethke Elshtain's opinion piece ("The Newtape File IV") in the June/July issue.

Take her amusement with the various efforts to define family and I will apply it to my own experience.

(1) A father, mother, and children—my father dies.

(2) A mother and children—my mother dies.

(3) I do my best to care for younger siblings—children and children.

Let us hear the raucous laughter—it wasn't funny then and it isn't funny now.

(4) My sister is a social worker who raised her two sons alone when her husband disappeared into the sunset. That should be worth a snicker or two.

(5) The Children's Defense Fund, a lawyer, and children—my oldest son is editor of all the publications of CDF, his wife is a public interest lawyer, and they have two young children. Let us hear a round of loud laughter for young people so idealistic they work for modest income on behalf of children.

Why does a publication that makes high claims to be Christian care so little about the least of these?

Virginia A. Heffernan
Bethesda, MD

Reconciling Athens and Jerusalem

In "Athens and Jerusalem, Again" (June/July), Peter J. Leithart argues that the differences between the platonic and biblical teachings are too great to be harmonized, especially on the question of homosexuality. This seems plainly in error.

Quoting primarily Phaedrus out of the *Symposium*, Leithart takes that particular man's perspective as the typical, and apparently loftiest, Greek attitude. But in the same dialogue, one may find Socrates taking a different stance, and it is obviously Socrates whom Plato intended as the greater authority.

At the climax of his speech on the subject of love, Socrates quotes the wise woman Diotima, who assured him that those who have reached the highest vision of beauty—a vision that seems to be the same vision of Heaven extolled by the prophets and apostles of the Bible—will grow beyond homosexual desire. In other words, homosexuality is a sign of a stunted soul, or at least one not yet fully realized. . . .

Leithart concludes that our Greek and Judeo-Christian traditional values are inconsistent with one another, but I hold to the contrary that not only do the Bible and Plato agree that the highest value is the love of the One, but that this is the core belief of Confucius, Lao Tzu, Muhammad, the Buddha, and all others who have distilled the truth to those principles that deserve to be called "first things."

Miles Hawthorne
Granbury, TX

A Simplistic Distinction?

Paul V. Mankowski's distinction between "the experience of religious authority" and the "authority of religious experience" ("The Skimpole Syndrome," May) is labored and simplistic. Further, it is insulting to dismiss an appeal to one's own religious experience by comparing it to a child's "I like what I like because I like it," and it is outrageous to place feminist (Carol Christ's) or any other religious experience that critiques biblical authority on a par with "Nazi theorist Alfred Rosenberg" trashing the Gospel of Mark.

Mankowski cites Jon Levenson's reminder that there was in "biblical times" no such thing as the Bible . . . and goes on to stress that the Bible "was assembled over a number of years *for* the Church and *by* the Church [not to mention the Synagogue, he might have added] . . . through liturgical usage and the ratification of bishops." In point of fact, parts of what is now the Bible were already, in "biblical times," influencing one way or another the community's "assembling" what became the rest of the Bible—e.g., Deuteronomy surely influenced the rest of the *Tanakh*; the letters of Paul, the rest of the New Testament; and the *Tanakh* itself, all of the New Testament.

The historical processes are imperfectly understood and the Spirit but dimly apprehended in the way by which the Bible has been shaped. The biblical record seems clear on one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

point, however: without the varied and compelling religious experience by which the prophets and apostles from time to time took sharp issue with religious authority—including the latter's interpretations of the emerging scriptures—there would be little Scripture to care about.

The issue is not between cumulative authority and the authority of lived religious experience. It is, among other things, whether their dialectical relationship is best nourished today in a religious community that is more nearly democratic than monarchic. But that is another subject.

As he has caricatured the authority of religious experience, Mankowski's Dickensian trope could as well be turned around to caricature canonical authority as he seems to invoke it: "We hold to what we hold because we hold it." You could say Father Mankowski is hoist with his own Skimpole.

Bruce T. Dahlberg
Smith College
Northampton, MA

Christianity and Sex

I read Phillip Turner's article, "Sex and the Single Life" (May), with some interest.

I found the first five pages both interesting and seemingly leading to the clear conclusion that sex outside of marriage is wrong and that arguments to the contrary, despite their intellectual/cultural appeal, are designed to appease a misguided society or church member. . . . Obviously Professor Turner is not in sympathy with the so-called Christian reformers' free-sex position; on the other hand, he is far from convincing in stating his own case, presumably the moral, biblical position.

My dictionary defines promiscuous as casual or indiscriminate, particularly applying to sexual relations. Prof. Turner states: "Most people who enter even the most casual sexual relation are not promiscuous. They are however lonely." This apparent definition is simply erroneous. Sex outside marriage, by definition, is promiscuous and a sin and more often than not driven by personal desire and self-gratification. Unfortunately, although I may have missed it, I don't recall Prof. Turner using the words sin or sinful in his article. He does, however, talk about "punishing legalism." I suppose that refers to the biblically "inerrant" position that calls a sin a sin and that demands clear distinctions between right and wrong acts. . . .

Robert N. Mateer
Lynchburg, VA

Philip Turner's "Sex and the Single Life" provides a much appreciated positive account of the Church's traditional teachings on social and sexual relations. Its great strength is that it begins from a pastoral point of departure rather than a dogmatic one. For this reader, Turner's approach makes eminent sense. Christian sexual norms have never been universally canonical. The Creeds, for instance, may be noted for their lack of sexual concern. As Turner notes, the historic cultures in which Christianity has been present have gone through periods of sexual license and restriction. He is right to emphasize the pastoral way in which Church teachings have been formed given the current practices of particular cultures. For this I applaud him.

I would urge him, in addition, to put the reformers advocating the New Ethic more on the defensive. The contemporary notions of "person" and "self" are brandished about with great deception. Charles Taylor's moral definition of the self needs to be challenged. As Turner rightly notes, this definition amounts to a dog chasing his tail. Why? Because the self and the person are both conceptions of human being that occur only in community. The mere talk of rights and respect for others already indicates the social foundation of selfhood. No matter how great or small is the self's interiorization and own consciousness, its being a self is shaped and formed by the larger social reality in which it exists. . . .

Let us press on to the upward call of God to engage our fellow men and women in the intimate social relations which the Church names communion. Therein lies the goal of all interpersonal relations. And let us make equally clear how intimate sexual relations are specific gifts that help define the basic building block of community as marriage and family. Let us challenge those who today define human being as preeminently sexual being, reminding them that our social being precedes and succeeds every one's sexual prowess. . . .

(The Rev.) Russell L. Meyer
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Isle of Palms, SC

True Shepherds

Your Jesuit correspondent's observations about shepherds inclined to treat wolves "pastorally" at the peril of sheep (Public Square, June/July) puts one in mind of the Bishop of Rochester's response to three fellow-bishops who visited him in the Tower of London in May 1535, to try to persuade him to submit to Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy and Oath of Succession:

> Me thinketh it had bene rather our partes to sticke together in repressinge these violent and unlawfull intrusions and injuries than by any manner of perswasions to helpe or sett forward the same. And we ought rather to seeke by all meanes the temporall distruccion of the so ravenous woolves, that daily goe about worryinge and devowringe everlastinglie the flocke that Christ committed to our Charge, and the flocke that himself dyed for, than to suffer them thus to range abroade. But (alas) seeing we do it not, ye see in what perill the Christen State nowe standeth: We are beseeged on all sides, and can hardly escape at the howse of God, what hope is there lette (if we fall) that the rest shall stande! The fort is betrayed even of them that should have defended it. And therfore seeinge the matter is thus begunne, and so faintly resisted on our parts, I feare we be not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> the men that shall see the ende of the miserie, wherfore seeing I am an ould man and looke not longe to live, I minde not by the helpe of God to trooble my conscience in pleasing the king this waie whatsoever become of me, but rather here to spend out the remnant of my old daies in prayinge to God for him.

On Tuesday, June 22, 1535, barely a month after Paul III had made him a Cardinal, John Fisher, the only bishop in England who refused to submit, was beheaded. From the scaffold he spoke:

> Christian people, I am come hither to die for the faith of Christ's holy Catholick Church, and I thanke God hitherto my stomack hath served me verie well thereunto, so that yet I have not feared death; wherfore I do desire you all to helpe and assiste me with your praiers, that at the verie point and instant of deaths stroake, I maie in that verie moment stand stedfast without faintinge in any one point of the Catholick faith, free from any feare; and I beseech almightie God of his infinite goodnes to save the kinge and this Realme, and that it maie please him to holde his holy hand over it, and send the king good Counsell.

His head, hung on London bridge along with those of the Carthusians executed earlier, was replaced two weeks later with that of Thomas More. John Fisher was canonized four hundred years later.

Helen Hull Hitchcock
St. Louis, MO

Poetry Critic

I note that a poem in the June/July edition, "Simple Anna," is a perfect commentary on the general run of poetry you publish.

"Simple Anna liked the words although she didn't understand what many of them meant" seems to reflect the only possible rationale behind publishing such poems as "Drouth" and "For Duns Scotus."

The only flaw is that the line indicates that the words are incomprehensible because Anna is "simple," when the truth is they are incomprehensible because they are sheer nonsense.

True, they do "sing" nicely, but printing words only because they have a nice ring seems somehow out of place in a magazine dedicated to promoting reality.

Chadron R. Orton
Rock Springs, WY

With Friends Like Us . . .

"Sober, reliable, prone to the pietistic, and too often dull" ("A Word on 'The Competition,'" Public Square, June/July). As I complete my fifteenth year with the *National Catholic Register,* it's the heartwarming encomiums from friends that I most enjoy. I'll pass the good word along to the rest of my staff—though, of course, I'll have to talk slowly.

Francis X. Maier
Editor
National Catholic Register

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND

the eighth annual

ERASMUS LECTURE

presented by

JAMES H. BILLINGTON
Librarian of Congress

Thursday
November 11
at 6:00 p.m.

Saint Peter's Church
619 Lexington Avenue
(at 54th Street)
New York City

For free ticket(s) (please indicate one or two), write:

1993 Erasmus Lecture
Religion and Public Life
156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400
New York, NY 10010

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Opinion

Crime and the Cure of the Soul

Charles Colson

Those of us who believe that our social and political order rests on moral foundations applaud William Bennett for his recently published *Index of Leading Cultural Indicators.* The *Index* graphically exposes the alarming extent to which those moral foundations have been eroded.

No more compelling evidence of crisis can be found than the staggering crime statistic: a 560 percent increase in violent crimes since the 1960s. Having worked in the field of crime and prisons for seventeen years, I especially applaud Bill Bennett's conclusion that crime is at root a moral problem: the inevitable price a culture pays for abandoning its moral tradition and failing to inculcate character in its youth.

But when it comes to the solution, Bennett and I part company. At the top of his list of policy recommendations is the old get-tough approach to crime. He calls for "a more effective and tough-minded criminal justice system, including more prisons, judges, and prosecutors." I submit that this is precisely the wrong place to start—and that Bennett has been taken in by a combination of old myths and recent studies.

For example, he argues that though the cost of incarcerating offenders is high, the cost of not incarcerating them is much higher. Without citing it by name, Bennett is using statistics from a study by Edwin Zedlewski entitled "Making Confinement Decisions." This study concluded that each year a criminal spends behind bars, society saves $430,000 in the direct and indirect costs associated with crime (damages, security, police, courts, prisons, etc.). The inescapable conclusion seems to be that incarceration is extraordinarily cost-effective.

The Zedlewski study was all the rage with conservatives for a time—until people began to examine its premises. It assumes that an average criminal on the loose commits 187 crimes per year. If that were true, then the fact that at the end of 1991 American prisons contained 824,133 people would mean we prevented 154,112,871 crimes that year. But this number is patently absurd: It is ten times the number of crimes actually reported that year.

Moreover, on Zedlewski's assumptions, the nation also saved $354,459,670,000 in costs. At this rate, putting more people behind bars would not only solve crime, it would also solve the national deficit!

A more serious problem with the Zedlewski study is the fundamental assumption on which it rests: the assumption that incarceration prevents crime. Government figures show no relationship between incarceration rates and crime rates. Between 1980 and 1991, the incarceration rate rose by a staggering 130 percent, yet the overall crime rate remained stubbornly at an all-time high. More disturbing, violent crime as a percentage of the overall rate rose by 27 percent.

The most serious error Bennett makes, however, is also the most surprising. He rightly identifies crime as a moral problem, then, astonishingly, offers as his primary policy recommendation the expansion of government programs. I know Bennett does not really believe government bureaucracies can remedy moral failings. He himself says, "There are real limits to what the state can do, particularly when it comes to imparting virtue and forming character." I would suggest he has not yet worked out what this skepticism toward government ought to mean for policy. As a result, he falls back on the lock-'em-up approach for which he was so well known as the nation's drug czar.

But we have tried that approach and it has failed. Other failed government programs may be able to complain they never got "full funding," but not prisons. Their coffers have been full: $37 billion in new prison construction over the last twenty years, with $15 billion more underway or planned. Today we have 1.3 million people in prisons and jails (nearly the size of our active-duty military) yet our streets are not any safer. Our schools, with their metal detectors and armed guards, look more like prisons than some prisons do. In some communities it is more dangerous for a young black man to walk the streets than it was to be an infantryman in Vietnam.

Other failed bureaucracies may claim they were undermined by political bickering, but not prisons. Seldom has a bureaucracy fit more snugly within the agendas of both the left and the right. Consider first the liberal approach. The prevailing liberal view has been that crime is caused by environmental factors—poverty, racism, oppression. This assumption shaped public policy in the 1930s and 1940s, when prisons stopped being regarded as places for punishment and became tools for "resocialization." Vestiges of this attitude are evident when liberals describe the Los Angeles riot as a "rebellion" or "uprising," as though what happened was not theft and arson but a protest against oppression.

But therapy proved no match for criminal behav-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ior. And today even most liberals have abandoned the hope that prisons can rehabilitate.

Conservative assumptions on crime and punishment are equally flawed. I know: I used to write Richard Nixon's law-and-order policies. Conservative politicians who thunder "lock 'em up and throw away the key" can always count on applause.

This approach rests on deterrent theory: that criminal behavior is deterred by fear of punishment. The problem is that fear does little to change behavior. The "Scared Straight" program in Rahway, New Jersey, subject of an award-winning documentary, was designed to frighten kids out of crime. But it had to be discontinued when kids *in* the program started committing more crimes than those outside.

The deterrent theory conceives of criminals as rational calculators who count the costs of spending time in prison against the benefits of crime. But the motivation behind crime is much more complex than that. And so, ironically, conservatives—who accuse liberals of throwing money at problems—have themselves been doing the same thing.

The painful truth is that both liberals and conservatives have forgotten how to account for character and creed. They have ignored the fact that the fate of the moral order depends on the state of the soul.

In 1977, psychologist Stanton Samenow and psychiatrist Samuel Yochelson published a landmark seventeen-year study, *The Criminal Personality*. They found that crime cannot be traced primarily to environmental factors. The only adequate explanation, they concluded, is the moral choices of individuals. The solution to crime, they said (revealing their Jewish roots), is "the conversion of the wrongdoer to a more responsible lifestyle."

In 1987 professors Richard J. Herrnstein and James Q. Wilson came to similar conclusions in *Crime and Human Nature*. They determined that the cause of crime is a lack of moral training in the morally formative years.

Clearly, the evidence points to the need for a moral response to crime. What might such a response look like?

First, it would take redemption more seriously than rehabilitation. That means encouraging volunteer efforts like Prison Fellowship, which has 50,000 volunteers who take the Gospel into prisons, teach values and lifestyle seminars, conduct Bible studies, correspond with inmates, and mentor them after release.

Of course, religious faith cannot be judged by its social utility, as though various religions could be rated in *Consumer Reports*. Nevertheless, we would be foolish to ignore religion's power to change the way people live. A 1990 study conducted at Loyola College in Maryland found that offenders who had participated in Prison Fellowship programs were nearly 22 percent less likely to be rearrested than those who had not. And even those who *were* rearrested were charged with less serious offenses.

Second, a new paradigm of punishment must distinguish between criminals who pose a physical threat to society and those who do not—and who would be more effectively punished by alternative sentencing. Bars and walls do serve a useful purpose in segregating the violent from the victim. But nearly 50 percent of prisoners are non-dangerous, and do not need to be housed in expensive prison cells ($80,000 to build, $20,000 per year to maintain). Instead, they should be placed in boot camps, community-based punishment or drug-treatment programs, or home incarceration with electronic monitoring (at a fraction of the cost and often with lower recidivism rates). Offenders who work in the community can be required to pay restitution to their victims, which forces them to accept responsibility for their behavior. This is real moral reformation.

Don't get me wrong. I do believe people who break the law ought to be punished. The question is merely what form of punishment works best for different classes of offenders. Alternative sentencing can be so demanding that many offenders *prefer* to go to prison. Moreover, the adoption of alternatives frees up the prison space needed to isolate truly dangerous offenders from the public. Attorney General Janet Reno recently noted that murderers and rapists spend little time behind bars precisely because low-level drug offenders are clogging our nation's prisons.

Third, even violent and predatory criminals should not merely be warehoused behind prison walls. It is scandalous that 1.3 million Americans sit in our prisons and jails doing nothing—at public expense. They ought to be required to participate in prison work programs to offset the costs of their incarceration. As an added benefit, work programs train inmates in marketable skills and help prepare them to reenter society. There currently exist numerous state-run and privately-run prison industries that teach criminals the value and rewards of hard work. These programs encourage a sense of responsibility and dignity, critical elements in moral reformation. Former Chief Justice Warren Burger stated the alternatives well: "Do we want prisoners to return to society as predators or producers?"

Fourth, and most important, we must confront our culture's crumbling moral consensus. Crime does not stem from inadequate law enforcement or an insufficient number of prison cells; it stems from a lack of values. In the early 1980s, James Q. Wilson surveyed American history for some trend correlating with crime data. Contrary to his expectations, crime did not correlate with any of the generally cited factors, such as poverty or urbanization. For example, the mid-nineteenth century was a period of rapid urbanization yet the level of crime actually fell. Why? Just as industrialization was getting underway, Wilson found, so was the religious revival known as the Sec-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ond Great Awakening, which brought with it widespread moral renewal.

British sociologist Christie Davies found the same thing. In the late nineteenth century when Sunday School attendance in Britain was at its peak, crime declined. Since then, attendance has declined and crime has increased.

The evidence is clear: Moral reformation, not expanding bureaucracies, is the answer to rising crime. But is it realistic? Do moral responses work?

Yes. I have seen it with my own eyes, both as a prisoner and as a visitor in six hundred prisons in thirty countries. And most dramatically, in Humaita Prison in San Jose Dos Campos, Brazil. Twenty years ago the prison was turned over to two Christian laymen to run. Their plan was to operate it on Christian principles.

The prison has only two full-time paid staff; the rest of the work is done by inmates. Every inmate is assigned a buddy for personal accountability (a strategy that has proven highly effective in the military). Every inmate is also assigned a volunteer family from the outside that works with him during his incarceration and assists him upon release. Inmates may choose between a chapel program or a course in character development.

In my visit to Humaita, I saw well-maintained grounds, clean living areas, inmates working industriously. Sayings from Psalms and Proverbs decorated the prison walls. At one point, my inmate guide offered to escort me to the notorious punishment cell once used for torture. Today, he told me, the cell houses only a single inmate. As we reached the end of the corridor and he put the key into the lock, he paused and asked, "Are you sure you want to go in?"

"Of course," I replied somewhat impatiently. "I've been in punishment cells all over the world." Slowly he swung the door open, and I saw the "inmate" in that punishment cell: a beautifully carved crucifix. Jesus hanging on the cross.

"He's doing time for all the rest of us," my guide said softly.

I am convinced that what I saw in the punishment cell at Humaita Prison explains why its recidivism rate remains at 4 percent, while in the rest of Brazil it is a staggering 75 percent. The moral and spiritual approach to crime *does* work. The lesson for us here in America is that we cannot build our way out of the crime problem. We will stem the surging tide of crime only by a rehabilitation of the soul.

CHARLES COLSON *is chairman of Prison Fellowship Ministries, based in Washington, D.C.*

Tiresias

I have walked now for days on end
with my eyes closed, thoughts
centered at the point of my
nose as I imagine a cat's
to be, drawn wink by sleepy
wink forward from the brain
until the inner resources
are pruned purple into a pure
moment of insignificance. I
walk this way because I see
better with my eyes shut, or
almost shut like the outline
of mascara on a Chinese doll.

I see before me a country lane
of Michaelmas daisies and
tawny goldenrod rounding
the lake to a beach of black
smooth rocks — I am in
Finland, or some inner landscape—

not the underground of last night.
Here is clean air and the sound
of water falling over mineral
shelves to clean streams below
the streets of my thoughts. Is
this a purple carpet I step on?

Travis Du Priest

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Battle Hymn of the Republic, Corrected
(chanted to no tune in particular)

Paul V. Mankowski

BEFORE: by Julia Ward Howe

Mine eyes have seen the glory
of the coming of the Lord.
He is trampling out the vintage
where the grapes of wrath are
stored. He has loosed the fateful
lightning of His terrible swift
sword. His truth is marching on!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
His truth is marching on!

He has sounded forth the trumpet
that will never call retreat. He
is sifting out the hearts of men
before his judgment seat. Be
swift, my soul, to answer Him; be
jubilant, my feet. Our God is
marching on!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
His truth is marching on!

In the beauty of the lilies
Christ was born across the sea,
with a glory in His bosom that
transfigures you and me. As He
died to make men holy, let us die
to make men free. While God is
marching on!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
His truth is marching on!

AFTER: Sanitized for your protection

I see God's approach; it is good.
God makes wine with God's feet, from
non-union grapes. Brightness flashes
from the decision-making apparatus.
God's worldview is currently earning
widespread respect.

Give honor repeatedly to the god
of our tradition.
We have owned our values.

A musical instrument is summoning
many people, including women of
color, into God's presence for ongoing
evaluation. I must walk quickly
and say yes to this invitation.
God's worldview, after all, is earning
widespread respect.

Give honor repeatedly to the god
of our tradition.
We have owned our values.

Our Faith Leader had a non-Western
agrarian background. His talents and
abilities changed our lives for the
better. We should make great efforts
for civil rights because he did for
world peace. God's worldview, we
recall, is earning widespread
respect.

Give honor repeatedly to the god
of our tradition.
We have owned our values.

Paul V. Mankowski, S.J., *is Assistant Professor of Semitic Languages at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When the Court Should Not Be Obeyed

Russell Hittinger

I

At the end of its 1992 term, the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Planned Parenthood of S.E. Pennsylvania v. Casey*. And immediately it became clear that the implications of the decision reached far beyond the resolution of the case.

Despite twenty years of general success in electoral politics at the national level and twelve years of making judicial appointments—with five of nine Supreme Court justices having been named by Ronald Reagan and George Bush—and despite an open alliance with the pro-life movement, Republicans had failed to produce a Court willing to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. The three authors of the joint opinion in *Casey*—Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, David Souter, and Anthony Kennedy—relied on a substantive due process analysis as well as judicial consideration of social policy. In doing so, these Reagan-Bush appointees exercised the very kind of jurisprudence that had marked the most activist episodes of the Warren and Burger Courts. At least on matters of abortion, the judicial strategy that had brought together the economic and social-issues wings of the Republican party was sundered by *Casey*.

True, the *Casey* Court did leave a few crumbs of the abortion issue on the plates of state legislatures. But the alliance between the two wings of Reagan-era Republicans had never galvanized Republican politics on the state level. State legislatures tend to be dominated by Democrats, and at this level, especially in the South, Democrats have tended to be more pro-life than Republicans. After Bush's defeat last November, some prominent Republicans, including both the outgoing and incoming Chairmen of the Republican National Committee, argued that the abortion issue is now settled as far as national politics is concerned, and the pro-life movement had better take its case to the culture. This was the mark of just how easily the party of judicial restraint and originalism had conceded the authority and political finality of the Court's decision in *Casey*.

The pro-life constituency, made up in large part of Catholics and Evangelical Protestants, is less than one generation removed from the Democratic party. To invite this constituency to concern itself with grass-roots politics and cultural persuasion is, in effect, to issue it a ticket back into the Democratic party, if not into a third party of some sort yet to be seen. In any event, just as developments in Eastern Europe in 1989 clouded the meaning of being "conservative" in foreign policy, so the *Casey* decision has caused confusion and instability in the conservative alliance on domestic matters.

The implications of the *Casey* decision, however, reach beyond a possible realignment of conservatives in the area of electoral politics. In the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade*, it was possible to say that legal abortion was the result of an activist Court that took the already nebulous notion of privacy one step too far. Pro-life citizens, along with proponents of strict judicial discipline, refused to regard *Roe* as a permanent feature of our constitutional polity. For twenty years, there was reason to hope that judicial appointments would gradually produce a favorable chemistry and winning numbers on the Court. Indeed, the Court's case law after *Roe* strongly indicated a gradual chipping away of the abortion right. Only those who indulged their darkest suspicions had reason to believe that *Roe* (in its entirety) would be maintained for long. On the eve of *Casey*, both sides were gearing up to battle the issue in the legislative arena.

The *Casey* Court, however, insisted that the right to procure an abortion is a fundamental right guar-

RUSSELL HITTINGER, *a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of* FIRST THINGS, *teaches in the School of Philosophy at the Catholic University of America.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. The authors of the joint opinion made it clear that the right is recognized on its own merit, and has nothing immediately to do with the nebulous area of marital privacy. Those areas of the judge-made abortion law that had provided occasion for chipping away at *Roe*—e.g., the scope of privacy, the trimester scheme, informed consent—were declared irrelevant to the "central holding" of *Roe*. If the rhetoric of the joint opinion is taken at face value, the abortion right cannot be denied without destroying the very fabric of the Constitution, the rule of law, and the legitimacy of the Court.

Therefore, the *Casey* decision forces us to ask unsettling questions. What does it mean for citizens to live in a polity in which the fundamental law of the Constitution requires them to cease and desist from conducting any serious business that touches upon the killing of the unborn? What does it mean for citizenship once the right to kill the unborn is equated with the franchise itself, and declared to be a more or less permanent feature of the law of the United States? What does it mean for a democratic republic if the people are declared legally incompetent to deal with an action that a large number of them regard as homicide?

The *Casey* decision has recklessly raised the political stakes on abortion. For the problem after *Casey* is not merely how to live in a culture that practices homicide as a form of birth control. Pro-life citizens were well aware that the culture had made this turn at least two decades ago. Moreover, the problem is not merely how to live in a political culture that would tolerate abortion. Most pro-life citizens understood that even if *Roe* were overturned, legislative abolition of all abortions was virtually impossible. The *Casey* decision recklessly raised the stakes by insisting that the abortion right is an unalterable feature of the fundamental law.

In order to judge whether or not these are merely idle, if not subversive, questions, let us revisit the decision.

II

The case concerned certain regulatory provisions of the Pennsylvania Abortion Control Act of 1982 (amended 1988 and 1989). The Act required, among other things, informed consent on the part of a woman seeking an abortion, informed consent of one parent in the case of a minor seeking an abortion, and notification of the spouse in the case of a married woman seeking an abortion.

The District and Circuit Courts reached different judgments about the constitutionality of these statutes. The United States, as it had done in five previous cases, asked the Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. At oral argument, the attorney for the abortion clinics contended that none of the statutes could be upheld without overruling *Roe*. To complicate matters still further, Chief Justice William Rehnquist—joined later by Justices ByronWhite, Antonin Scalia, and Clarence Thomas—asserted that the plurality decision of *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* in 1989 had, in effect, already overturned *Roe*.

Thus, the authors of the joint opinion understood that this case required more than a mere fine-tuning of *Roe v. Wade*. Justices O'Connor, Souter, and Kennedy acknowledged "that our decisions after *Roe* cast doubt upon the meaning and reach of its holding." Two decades after pronouncing that the Constitution protects a woman's right to terminate her pregnancy, "that definition of liberty," they conceded, "is still questioned." Given this doubt, and the confusion besetting state and federal officials as to the constitutional standard governing the issue, the authors of the joint opinion set out "to review once more the principles that define the rights of the woman and the legitimate authority of the state respecting the termination of pregnancies by abortion procedures."

It was incumbent upon them, therefore, not only to clarify their judicial handiwork, but also to justify the law. In short, this was not to be an ordinary case of judicial review, for what was at issue was not merely these Pennsylvania statutes (with the exception of the spousal notification, all were upheld by the joint opinion), but a mess of the Court's own making.

In the order of clarification, the Court faced the daunting task of (1) clarifying the precise nature of the woman's right, (2) mapping out where it intersects with the potential interests of spouses, fetuses, and the states, and (3) making sense of all this in the light of the patchwork of case law since *Roe*. In the order of justification, the justices faced the equally daunting task of (1) upholding *Roe* even while prescinding from the issue of whether it was correctly decided, (2) explaining their particular view of *stare decisis* in the matter, and (3) defending the jurisdictional, political, and even philosophical authority of the Court over the subject of abortion.

Whatever we might think of the final handiwork of the *Casey* Court, one has to be impressed by the complexity of the problems it tackled. There is no space here to treat all of the problems at their proper level of detail (they represent a virtual syllabus of the most disputed subjects in constitutional law). But for our purposes, there is one issue in particular that needs to be addressed: why does the Court uphold *Roe v. Wade*? On what ground, and according to what principle, does it bind all of the legislatures of our polity to refrain from enacting laws that place an "undue burden" in the path of women seeking abortions?

The authors of the joint opinion aver that they uphold the "central holding" of *Roe* on two grounds.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

First, the right to procure an abortion is justified on the ground of its intrinsic merit. Second, the right is justified in terms of the reliance of the people, especially women, on legal abortion.

The first path of analysis seeks to identify a fundamental right that ought to be placed beyond the processes of ordinary politics. As Justice William Brennan once declared: "It is the very purpose of a Constitution—and particularly of the Bill of Rights—to declare certain values transcendent, beyond the reach of temporary political majorities." So put, the substance of the abortion right represents a certain *debitum*—something owed in the order of justice to the woman.

The second path of analysis seeks to identify the contingent and evolving social and economic needs of citizens. Here, the right to an abortion is affirmed not because of its substantive merit in the moral order of things, nor because the Constitution mandates its protection, but rather because it is deemed to be in the interests of the common good. In effect, the Court ruled in *Casey* that, whether or not *Roe* was a mistaken application of constitutional law, the ruling has become woven into the fabric of the law—law, that is, insofar as it consists of customs, legal expectations, and that vast array of activities that rely upon settled rules.

These two paths of jurisprudence represent, as it were, the two lobes of the modern judicial brain. It is well known, of course, that they do not always communicate effectively, or even coherently, with one another. On the one hand, the Court wants to articulate and to defend certain individual rights against the pressure of political majorities; on the other hand, the Court wants to treat the right as something instrumentally necessary to social order. The former approach looks upon the right as something that transcends the political sphere, while the latter regards the right in the light of what would seem to be the very essence of the political: viz., in terms of policy issues related to the common good.

While the tension between these two paths of jurisprudence is interesting in its own right, the problem becomes especially acute when the subject of abortion is brought into the picture. We cannot forget that *Roe* turned what used to be homicide at criminal law into a fundamental right at constitutional law. Hence, when the Court issues a command to the various branches and departments of government to cease and desist from legislating restrictions on abortion, the Court forbids citizens from making and applying criminal laws. This represents the most draconian limitation upon the legislative competence of the citizens.

In the matter of abortion, who is bound? We are. "We," that is, insofar as we are citizens who deliberate and act through democratic assemblies. The alleged right to abortion, therefore, renders the citizens themselves duty-bound to recognize the right of those who elect to kill the unborn. It is both false and useless to pretend that the moral issue is transacted in a merely private sphere, because the principle of the right binds all of the citizens as to what they may legitimately do *qua citizens* (that is, in making and enforcing laws, in formulating policies, and in conducting any public business that touches upon the alleged right). To use the language of *Casey*, citizens may not act through democratic assemblies to impose "undue burden(s)" upon the choice to have an abortion.

Given the two different paths of analysis, we can reasonably ask why we are duty-bound to obey this command of the Court. In terms of political morality, it makes a considerable difference which line of analysis generates the answer. On the first view, the limits upon our legislative and policy-making competencies are derived as implications of an inherent right of individuals to kill the unborn. On the second view, the limits are derived as implications of social needs. Here, we are duty-bound to operate according to the exigencies of the common good (as ascertained by the Court).

Even if the Court has no delegated authority to impose such a policy decision, it still makes a difference whether the rule is derived from the alleged merit of the right or from the purported needs of the common good. An inherently wicked rule can never be followed. At least for pro-life citizens, the notion that anyone has a fundamental right to kill the unborn is a rule that cannot be obeyed. In the moral order, no one can be obligated to respect that "right." A rule imposed without proper authority, however, can be followed if one has reasons independent of the "authority" to conform one's actions to the rule. So, for example, the Court might have no authority to command legislatures to tolerate prostitution. But we might have good reasons to conform our actions to this command. So, too, in the matter of abortion. Even if the Court has no legitimate power to command us to adhere to its abortion policy, we might have good reason to tolerate abortion for the sake of the common good. This difference is not a mere scholastic quibble.

III

Consider first the Court's understanding of the abortion right. Here, the Court insists that the entire polity is duty-bound to respect the abortion right because the "right" is just. In reaffirming the "central holding" of *Roe*, the authors of the joint opinion remark that the right stands "at an intersection of two lines of decision," each of which traces out a "general right."

In the first place, there is the line of cases running from *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965), through *Eisenstadt v. Baird* (1972), to *Carey v. Population Services*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(1977). These cases protected citizens against state interference in decisions relating to whether sex should be procreative. *Griswold* limited the protection to married people. *Eisenstadt* extended the protection to unmarried people, and *Carey* extended the right of privacy in this matter to minors. Regarding this line of judge-made privacy law, the *Casey* Court states unequivocally: "We have no doubt as to the correctness of those decisions."

In the second place, the Court calls attention to cases pertaining to a right of "physical autonomy," especially in terms of limits on the power of government to mandate medical treatments. It cites the *Cruzan* (so-called "right to die") case as an example of liberty related to medical treatments.

The joint opinion, however, asserts that, "in whichever doctrinal category one reads the case, the result for present purposes will be the same." By either line of cases, the woman, the authors conclude, has a right "to retain the ultimate control over her destiny and her body, claims implicit in the meaning of liberty." "And it falls to us," they add, "to give some real substance to the woman's liberty to determine whether to carry her pregnancy to full term."

These convergent lines of judge-made privacy law have been transformed into a single substantive due process right. In other words, in the twenty-five years since *Griswold*, the Court has moved from privacy as a marital right, to privacy as a right of adults in or out of marriage to control over the decision as to whether sex be procreative, to privacy as a right of teenagers, to privacy as a unilateral right to abort the unborn during the first two trimesters—and finally, in 1992, to the *Casey* Court's conception of a general right of liberty.

With respect to the word "liberty" in the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, the authors of the joint opinion explain that:

> At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life. Beliefs about these matters could not define the attributes of personhood were they formed under compulsion of the State.

Not only the authors of the joint opinion, but also Justices John Paul Stevens and Harry Blackmun, in concurring opinions, range far and wide in the Bill of Rights, trying to pinpoint the precise nature and scope of this prodigious right. The joint opinion, for example, refers variously to woman's right of "autonomy" and "liberty" to make "intimate" decisions.

Justice Stevens found at least three distinct rights embraced by the liberty to abort fetuses: first, gender equality, as required by the Equal Protection clause; second, a general right of "conscience" to make "empowering decisions," presumably found in the First Amendment; and third, the right of the citizen, as against government, in respect to an establishment of religion. Justice Blackmun likewise referred to the Equal Protection clause and to the Establishment clause as textual places from which to build an argument against governmental interference in the decision to procure an abortion. Blackmun, however, took the argument one step further, by suggesting that restrictive abortion laws violate the Thirteenth Amendment right against involuntary servitude: "By restricting the right to terminate pregnancies, the State conscripts women's bodies into its service, forcing women to continue their pregnancies, suffer the pains of childbirth, and in most instances, provide years of maternal care."

Whether the right is placed under the rubric of "decisional autonomy" or "liberty," it is clear enough what the *Casey* Court wished to assert. The power of the state is limited in the area of abortion. The cause or principle of the limit is the individual's inherent right of autonomy.

According to the joint opinion, this right is as profound as it is extensive. We are given to understand that governmental interference in the matter of abortion constitutes nothing less than personicide. When the state outlaws abortion, or places "undue burdens" in the path of a woman seeking one, the state deprives the woman of a crucial self-defining decision, and robs her of those attributes of selfhood constituted by free choice. We are not surprised, then, that the justices would conclude that the "legitimacy" of both the judiciary and the rule of law requires the recognition of this right.

The Court has imposed a right of liberty that, by logic of analogy, and by consistency of application, would guarantee that a government of positive laws is morally impossible. Such a comprehensive right as the one announced in *Casey* implies that ordered liberty effected by the "compulsion of the state" necessarily violates the most solemn natural right of citizens to maintain the integrity, if not the very existence, of their persons. Read literally, and applied consistently, this right would give citizens an immunity from virtually all positive laws.

Once again, the key question is the principle or the reason for the limit. Looking only at this part of the *Casey* decision, the answer is clear. The judicially imposed right is not a mere creature of positive law. It is not a legislative enactment tolerating abortion. Nor is it a declaration of a want of power on the part of legislatures. Rather, the limit is due to the woman, according to the order of justice as understood by the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

This is troubling news for those who believe that abortion is wrongful homicide. It makes Governor Mario Cuomo's position, outlined at Notre Dame in 1984, that one is privately against abortion but bound

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the public sphere to a different principle, completely irrelevant. Governor Cuomo has been mercilessly criticized for holding this view. But if the right were a legislative toleration for the sake of the common good, or if the right were a liberty exercised in the absence of a governmental power, his position would be plausible. One could maintain, along with Cuomo, that a superordinate principle in the public sphere either requires toleration or takes away authority to treat the matter, without supposing that one approves of the action protected by right, and without supposing that the right is inherent.

Take for example the act of treason. It could happen that due to modern informational technology, security over state secrets is so compromised that the national legislature removes legal liabilities attached to the act of disclosing state secrets. Or imagine, alternatively, that the Constitution neglected to delegate to any branch of the United States government power to prosecute its own officers for treason. In either scenario, the traitor can be said to have a right. But the reasons for the right are not grounded in the merit of the act, but rather in either a legislative toleration or a want of power on the part of authority constituted by the positive law. One could say, apropos of Cuomo's position on abortion, that he is privately against treason, but bound in the public sphere to a superordinate principle.

This, however, is not the Court's position. And it would be useless, not to say dishonest, to pretend it is. Again, looking only at the rights argument in *Casey*, the Court binds the citizens in a way that must inevitably create a terrible crisis of conscience. It is comparable to Lincoln's charge in 1859 that the Court in *Dred Scott* did not content itself with arguments concerning a want of power in Congress, or with arguments tailored to support the political toleration of slavery, but rather took the next step of declaring the right of property in other men to be a fundamental right, unalterable by ordinary politics.

What does the logic of fundamental rights entail? If someone has a right, it means that others are duty-bound to do or not do something with respect to the claimant. It is important to understand that so long as we are not speaking in some loose or metaphorical sense about rights, a right does not bind its holder, but rather makes others duty-bound. For this reason, rights language can never be a merely private thing.

Moral conscience cannot be relieved by the legal fact that citizens also have a right not to kill their unborn children. Whether we elect to kill them or not, the principle stands undiminished and unqualified. For the law recognizes a civil right of individuals to commit wrongful acts of homicide, and prohibits the citizens, working through democratic assemblies, from proscribing such acts. Put bluntly, but accurately, those who choose not to kill their own children are exercising the very same right as those who deliberately kill them.

What any of us does in a merely private capacity is irrelevant to the issue at hand. Had *Dred Scott* been maintained, it would have been irrelevant to a Vermont farmer that he chose not to use slave labor, so long as the law required him to cease and desist from legislating or conducting any public business touching upon slavery.

Moreover, the abortion right seems to recognize a private franchise over matters of life and death. But such a power is exercised legitimately only in the light of a public end, and even then only according to public procedures and the most exacting standards of accountability. The power of lethal force does not belong to the individual citizen, except as it is recognized at common law in the case of self-defense. Neither the *Roe* nor *Casey* Courts made any pretense that this is what is at stake in the right to abortion. Rather, the woman is alleged to have a right to kill the unborn for private ends, without any public accountability or justification.

In fact, the abortion cases make it clear beyond any doubt that the reason and ground of the right consist in the woman's estimation of her private good. Of course, the Court could have argued that the right consists in the woman's liberty to effectuate some public good—such as population control. But, with respect to the abortion right, the "good" in question is essentially private. Indeed, the Court has repeatedly insisted not only that the right stands in sharp contrast to the public good represented by the pro-natalist policies of the state (and that, up to the point of viability, trumps the state's interests), but also that the right is to be exercised even against the express desires of the marital spouse.

Thus, the abortion right is nothing less than a purported right of individual citizens to use lethal force without even the charade of being deputized to do so, and without any of the constraints that the government ordinarily imposes upon itself when it kills persons.

In sum, the first path of analysis in *Casey* reaches a clear conclusion, but at the price of creating a crisis of conscience on the part of citizens who believe that legal abortion is morally acceptable only as a kind of toleration for the sake of public peace. This is, of course, the position of many if not most citizens. But, as I said, the first path of analysis in *Casey* does not consult the attitudes, much less the will, of the majority. Rather, it is (to use Ronald Dworkin's terms) "a matter of principle."

IV

Yet, if we follow the other path of analysis in *Casey*, a somewhat different picture emerges as to why we are bound to obey the Court's command. The joint opinion contends: "[W]e are satisfied that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the immediate question is not the soundness of *Roe*'s resolution of the issue, but the precedential force that must be accorded the holding." Even assuming that *Roe* was incorrectly decided (an assumption that the authors of the joint opinion make no effort to dispel), the limits imposed upon the state by *Roe* now have a life of their own, and cannot be removed "without serious inequity to those who relied upon it." Hence, the Court set out to "gauge the respective costs of reaffirming or overruling a prior case."

In gauging the social costs, the *Casey* Court makes more than one argument in favor of letting the *Roe* decision stand. The centerpiece of its reasoning, however, is captured in the following passage:

> Abortion is customarily chosen as an unplanned response to the consequence of unplanned activity or to the failure of conventional birth control. . . . [F]or two decades of economic and social developments, people have organized their intimate relationships and made choices that define their views of themselves and their places in society in reliance on the availability of abortion in the event that contraception should fail. The ability of women to participate equally in the economic and social life of the Nation has been facilitated by their ability to control their reproductive lives.

"An entire generation," the justices conclude, "has come of age free to assume *Roe*'s concept of liberty in defining the capacity of women to act in society, and to make reproductive decisions."

From this point of view, the Court is not necessarily committed to recognizing a fundamental, substantive due process, right. Rather, it only needs to say that the judge-made law imposed by *Roe*, whether constitutionally correct or incorrect, has become an organic feature of the citizens' legal expectations. The Court must act responsibly, and assess the likely damage not only to the citizens' ordinary lives, but also to their respect for the rule of law. This, of course, is precisely the kind of consideration that a legislature would give to the matter. It is not difficult to imagine a legislature judging that it must tolerate certain actions—indeed, tolerate its own mistaken legislation with regard to these actions—on account of the common good.

Interestingly, the authors of the joint opinion compare the prospect of overruling *Roe* to their predecessors' act of overruling *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and *Lochner v. New York* (1905). The separate but equal doctrine upheld in *Plessy* and the substantive due process right to liberty of contract established in *Lochner* were legitimately overturned, they assert, because the social and economic facts had changed.

> *West Coast Hotel* and *Brown* each rested on facts, or an understanding of facts, changed from those which furnished the claimed justifications for the earlier constitutional resolutions. Each case was comprehensible as the Court's response to facts that the country could understand. . . . As the decisions were thus comprehensible they were also defensible, not merely as the victories of one doctrinal school over another by dint of numbers . . . but as applications of constitutional principle to facts. . . . In constitutional adjudication as elsewhere in life, changed circumstances may impose new obligations, and the thoughtful part of the Nation could accept each decision to overrule a prior case as a response to the Court's constitutional duty.

What is this about "the thoughtful part of the nation"? "The Court's power lies," they continue, "in its legitimacy, a product of substance and perception that shows itself in the people's acceptance of the Judiciary as fit to determine what the Nation's law means and to declare what it demands." In a similar vein, they assert, "Thus, the Court's legitimacy depends on making legally principled decisions under circumstances in which their principled character is sufficiently plausible to be accepted by the Nation."

These remarks seem to suggest that *Roe* must stand, not because people perceive it as just, but because people (in any event, the "thoughtful" people) would regard overturning it as unjust.

We must ask what kind of justice or injustice is being considered. With regard to *Plessy v. Ferguson*, for instance, are the benefits and burdens of law to be distributed without respect to skin pigmentation, or does the Equal Protection clause only require the Court to adjust the law to the current perceptions of equality? Perhaps I have misread *Plessy*, but the majority seem to have ruled that racial segregation was permitted under the Equal Protection clause precisely because law must express rather than change (or direct) social perceptions of equality. True, the joint opinion in *Casey* pays lip service to the principled argument against *Plessy*, but does so in less than a complete sentence, hedged in the context of explaining why social facts authorize judicial decisions. (Interestingly, while some pro-choice lawyers anxiously noted that, according to this analysis, the abortion right would seem to dangle on the thread of the Court's estimation of social facts, the African-American community mounted no objection to the notion that the doctrine of separate but equal was wrong only because of changing facts, or perceptions of facts.)

Once again, then, we return to the question of how and why we are bound to obey the Court's command in *Casey*. As the authors of the joint opinion say: "Consistent with other constitutional norms, legislatures may draw lines which appear arbitrary without

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the necessity of offering a justification." That is to say, were a legislature to make a determination in this area of abortion, all we need to know for purposes of law is that the legislature willed it. But the Court must give a constitutional justification. What is it?

The Court appears to be saying that we are bound because its ruling comports with the common good. Were the social facts to change—for instance, if most citizens no longer relied upon abortion as a method of contraception—then the holding could go the other way.

Therefore, despite all of the usual rhetoric about the Court defending rights against political majorities—such rhetoric being strewn throughout the joint opinion—the counter-majoritarian principle is reduced to the mere fact that a nonelected body imposed the rule in the light of what it deemed to be the perceptions of the "thoughtful part" of the nation. Moreover, despite all of the hand-wringing about the precedential force of judicial decisions, and about the importance of *stare decisis*, the joint opinion really has nothing immediately to do with the precedential standing of a body of legal opinion. After all, *Casey* explicitly overturns all of the previous case law regarding the trimester scheme, all of the previous case law regarding informed consent, all of common law regarding the interests and responsibilities of husbands. Chief Justice Rehnquist observed that "one might inquire how the joint opinion can view the 'central holding' of *Roe* as so deeply rooted in our constitutional culture, when it so casually uproots and disposes of that same decision's trimester framework."

No, this is not a decision that respects precedent. Rather, it is a decision that respects the cultural and economic force of women and the impact of the decision upon their lives. While it is always prudent to respect the power of women, this is not necessarily the same thing as respect for precedent. So put, this second path of analysis seems to hold not only civil rights, but the precedent of the Court's own case law, hostage to what enlightened opinion regards as the common good, as defined by their social, economic, and lifestyle needs.

V

"Liberty," says the first sentence of the joint opinion, "finds no refuge in a jurisprudence of doubt." To paraphrase Bentham, the Court set out in *Casey* to pluck the mask of mystery from the face of its abortion jurisprudence. But at the end of the day, the justices have created more doubt than existed under the regime of abortion imposed by *Roe*. On the one hand, they have made claims about the nature of the abortion right that go far beyond anything in *Roe* or in the post-*Roe* cases. Indeed, the right announced in *Casey* is more absolute and all-encompassing than any right heretofore recognized, even during the Court's most activist episodes. On the other hand, the legitimacy of the Court's command appears to depend neither upon the constitutional correctness of *Roe* nor upon the justices' philosophical ruminations about the nature of liberty. Rather, it depends upon the estimation of the Court about the culture's reliance on an ultimate method of contraception, and the justices' hunch about how much the Court's prestige would be diminished if it were to tell women that the Constitution provides no right to kill the unborn.

If the reason for obedience is the common good, rather than some intrinsic merit of the abortion right, then perhaps the crisis of conscience over the judge-made abortion law can be delayed. Even if the Court has acted *ultra vires* in issuing the command, the substance of the command *could* be reconciled with conscience. That is, we could say that the Court has moved itself ahead of the legislative curve, and has imposed a statute of the sort that we would have had to live with anyway. The important point is that we are not bound to obey a rule that asserts the rightfulness of abortion. Nor are we committed to the notion that the right of abortion is an unalterable feature of the fundamental law (though we are left in the lurch as to how it might be altered).

But the Court does not give us a clear or consistent answer to the question of why we are bound. Under the most benign scenario, citizens must adjust themselves to a rule issued without due authority. This is problem enough. Yet Americans have been living under a kind of judicial oligarchy for decades. Under the worst scenario, citizens are bound to recognize as a matter of fundamental law (not mere statute) a right to commit wrongful homicide. For millions of citizens, this is intolerable. Though the moral sensibility of the citizenry be debauched, it is not so depraved that such citizens will be able to live with this situation for long. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How the World Lost Its Story

Robert W. Jenson

I

It is the whole mission of the church to speak the gospel. As to what sort of thing "the gospel" may be, too many years ago I tried to explain that in a book with the title *Story and Promise,* and I still regard these two concepts as the best analytical characterization of the church's message. It is the church's constitutive task to tell the biblical *narrative* to the world in proclamation and to God in worship, and to do so in a fashion appropriate to the content of that narrative, that is, as a *promise* claimed from God and proclaimed to the world. It is the church's mission to tell all who will listen, God included, that the God of Israel has raised his servant Jesus from the dead, and to unpack the soteriological and doxological import of that fact.

That book, however, was directed to the *modern* world, a world in which it was presumed that stories and promises make sense. What if these presumptions are losing hold? I will in this essay follow the fashion of referring to the present historical moment as the advent of a "*post*modern" world, because, as I am increasingly persuaded, the slogan does point to something real, a world that has no story and so cannot entertain promises. Two preliminary clarifications are, however, needed.

The first of these is that while the Western world is now "post"-modern in the sense that modernity is dying around us, it is not "post"-modern in the sense that any new thing is yet replacing it. Most of those who talk of postmodernism are belated disciples of Friedrich Nietzsche. And to understand ourselves, we must indeed study Nietzsche. Specifically, we must learn from Nietzsche about *nihilism,* about an historical reality defined purely by negations. But only half of Nietzsche's prophecy shows any sign of being fulfilled. In Nietzsche's vision, the nihilism in which Western civilization ends was to be at once a collapse into decadence and the fulfillment of an absolute freedom. There would at once appear the hollow "last man" and the glorious "superman." The "last man" is plainly on the scene, but superman is so far missing. In my use of "postmodern," "post-" has purely apophatic force.

The second clarification is terminological. When general or theological historians refer to the "modern world" or "modernity," they mean the Western era dominated by the strategies and organizations of instrumental and critical reason. Whether they then date the beginning of modernity with the first appearances of the Enlightenment or earlier depends on their interpretation of Reformation and Renaissance.

But the term "postmodernism" became current outside this general discourse, within artistic and literary criticism, and in this other more specialized discourse, the "modernism" to which "post-" was prefixed has meant the sensibility that emerged in the arts around the turn of the present century, in deliberate *rejection* of the world shaped by Enlightenment and Romanticism, i.e., of the world otherwise called "modern." "Postmodernism" in its original use merely named a variant of that "modernist" sensibility itself, insofar as the avant-garde was perceived to have somehow survived itself.

When participants in and historians of the more general intellectual and spiritual culture outside the arts have subsequently come to speak of "postmodernism" in larger application, the "modern" to which something is said to be "post-" is modernity in its more general historical sense. Thus "postmodernism" in *this* use denotes the penetration into the wider spiritual and cultural life of that sensibility which appeared earlier in the arts and there was called precisely "modernism." That is, "postmodernism" *outside* the arts is the same thing as "mod-

Robert W. Jenson *is Professor of Religion at St. Olaf College and author, most recently, of* Unbaptized God *(Fortress Press).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ernism"—including "postmodernism" as there spoken of—*in* the arts. That a "postmodernist" turn is seen in the general culture all these years after modernism/postmodernism appeared in the arts simply marks the usual historical lag between developments in the arts and analogous developments in politics and philosophy and theology and daily life.

II

The modern world, the world that instrumental and critical reason built, is falling about us. Modernity, it now becomes evident, has been all along eroding its own foundations; its projects and comforts have depended on an inheritance to which it has itself been inimical. Walter Lippmann spoke of "the acids of modernity"; as it turns out, the stones attacked by this acid have been those on which the modern world was itself erected. Analysts from all relevant disciplines converge on one insight: modernity has lived on a moral and intellectual capital that it has not renewed, and indeed could not have renewed without denying itself. They moreover agree that this intellectual and moral capital was that built up by the Christian church's long establishment in the West, also if they themselves do not share the church's faith or even admire it.

Perhaps the fall of modernity will be complete in our lifetimes; perhaps it will occupy another century. However long it takes, any successor society is still too distant—or perhaps too precluded—to discern. It is the collapse itself amidst which the church must for the foreseeable future live and speak the gospel, it is modernity's time of ending as such that constitutes the Western church's postmodern mission field. As the church once lived and conducted her mission in the precisely *post*-Hellenistic and *post*-Roman-imperial world, remembering what had vanished but not knowing what if anything could come next, so the church must now live and conduct her mission in the precisely "post"-modern world.

The self-destruction of modernism can be described basically under two rubrics: story and promise. The question is what the church is now required to do with respect to each. First, story.

III

The modern world's typical way of knowing human life was what Hans Frei has taught theologians to call "realistic narrative." The novels of Jane Austen and James Baldwin are "realistic narratives"; so are the histories of Gibbon or your local newspaper; so are soap operas. "Realistic narrative" is a particular way of telling a sequence of events which is distinguished from other possible forms by two characteristics.

First, the sequential events are understood jointly to make a certain kind of sense—a dramatic kind of sense. Aristotle provided the classic specification of dramatically coherent narrative. In a dramatically good story, he said, each decisive event is unpredictable until it happens, but immediately upon taking place is seen to be exactly what "had" to happen. So, to take the example of Aristotle's own favorite good story, we could not know in advance that Oedipus would blind himself but once he has done it instantly see that the whole story must lead to and flow from just this act.

Second, the sequential dramatic coherence is of a sort that could "really" happen, i.e., happen in a presumed factual world "out there," external to the text. Thus Len Deighton's story of the Winter family did not in fact occupy time and space in pre-Nazi and Nazi Germany, but there is nothing in the story itself to say that it might not have. With this kind of narrative the question of whether the story depicts something beyond itself, and if it does, how accurately, are therefore subsequent and independent questions.

But now notice two things supposed by this way of reporting our lives to ourselves. First and obviously, it is supposed that stories dramatically coherent à la Aristotle are the *appropriate* way to understand our human task and possibility. The modern West has supposed that living on the patterns of King Lear or Horatio Alger is appropriate to beings of the sort we are, and living on the patterns of a schizophrenic or Till Eulenspiegel is not. We have supposed that we somehow "ought" to be able to make dramatic sense of our lives. (We should note that humankind does not universally share the supposition: not shamanist cultures nor Confucian or Taoist China nor the high Indian religions suppose any such thing.)

And it is further supposed that some stories dramatically coherent à la Aristotle are "realistic," that is, that they may be fitted to the "real" world, the world as it is in itself prior to our storytelling. The use of realistic narrative as the normal way of understanding human existence supposes that reality out there, "the world" itself, makes dramatic sense à la Aristotle, into which narrative the stories we tell about ourselves can and sometimes do fit. Put it this way: the way in which the modern West has talked about human life supposes that an omniscient historian could write a *universal* history, and that this is so because the universe with inclusion of our lives is in fact a story written by a sort of omnipotent novelist.

That is to say, modernity has supposed we inhabit what I will call a "narratable world." Modernity has supposed that the world "out there" is such that stories can be told that are true *to it*. And modernity has supposed that the reason narratives can be true to the world is that the world somehow "has" its own true story, antecedent to, and enabling of, the stories we tell about ourselves in it.

There is no mystery about how Western modernity came by this supposition. The supposition is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

straightforwardly a secularization of Jewish and Christian practice—as indeed these are the source of most key suppositions of Western intellectual and moral life. The archetypical body of realistic narrative is precisely the Bible; and the realistic narratives of Western modernity have every one been composed in, typically quite conscious, imitation of biblical narrative. Aristotle's definition found its future through a strange channel.

Postmodernism is characterized by the loss of this supposition in all of its aspects. We can see this most vividly in literature. The paradigmatic fictional works of the twentieth century either present accounts that make dramatic sense in themselves, but tell of events or sequences that could not occur in the world outside the storytelling; or they meticulously describe events that could occur or perhaps actually have occurred in "the real world," but in such fashion as to display precisely their lack of dramatic coherence. Gunter Grass' *The Tin Drum* may serve as an example of the first mode, Sartre's *Nausea* as an example of the second, and Joyce's *Ulysses* of both at once.

The same modes appear in the visual arts. The classical visual art of the modern West was at once realistic and narrative; it portrayed the world beyond itself, and constrained within itself some portion of a narrative possible in that world. Thus one of Valesquez's royal family portraits depicts both a set of actual and recognizable human individuals, and relationships between them that can be described only by narrative.

Modernist/postmodernist art is in most of its modes defined precisely by a passion to avoid any such portrayal. Most usually this is done by elevating the formal or expressive aspects of the act or product of art to be themselves the subject-matter of the work. I have long remembered the remark of a notable art critic—though I have forgotten which one—that many modernist paintings could be understood as *fragments* of classical painting blown up for their own sake, displaying the formal and technical elements by which painting is accomplished but eschewing the narrative depiction within which such patches of paint on canvas would earlier have had their place.

But there is also a meticulously realistic modernism that carefully reproduces pieces of the world out there, but in such fashion as either to tell a story that is impossible in the world, as in surrealism, or to alienate the depicted reality altogether from our quest for coherence. So every item in a painting by Magritte is an item of our accustomed world, and yet nothing hangs together in the way we expect; we cannot make out what story has been, or will be, going on with the persons and objects depicted. And precisely to induce this schizophrenic apprehension in us was the stated purpose for which Magritte and other surrealists and modernist realists have made their works.

If there is little mystery about where the West got its faith in a narratable world, neither is there much mystery about how the West has lost this faith. The entire project of the Enlightenment was to maintain realist faith while declaring disallegiance from the God who was that faith's object. The story the Bible tells is asserted to be the story of God with His creatures; that is, it is both assumed and explicitly asserted that there is a true story about the universe because there is a universal novelist/historian. Modernity was defined by the attempt to live in a universal story without a universal storyteller.

The experiment has failed. It is, after the fact, obvious that it had to: if there is no universal storyteller, then the universe can have no story line. Neither you nor I nor all of us together can so shape the world that it can make narrative sense; if God does not invent the world's story, then it has none, then the world has no narrative that is its own. If there is no God, or indeed if there is some other God than the God of the Bible, there is no narratable world.

Moreover, if there is not the biblical God, then realistic narrative is not a plausible means for our human self-understanding. Human consciousness is too obscure a mystery to itself for us to script our own lives. Modernity has added a new genre of theater to the classic tragedy and comedy: the absurdist drama that displays precisely an absence of dramatic coherence. Sometimes such drama depicts a long sequence of events with no turning points or denouement; sometimes it displays the absence of any events at all. Samuel Beckett has, of course, written the archexamples of both, with *Waiting for Godot* and *Krapp's Last Tape*. If we would be instructed in the postmodern world, we should seek out a performance of Beckett—the postmodern world *is* the world according to Beckett.

The arts are good for diagnosis, both because they offer a controlled experience and because they always anticipate what will come later in the general culture. But the general culture has now caught up with postmodernism, and for experience of the *fact*, we should turn from elite art to the streets of our cities and the classrooms of our suburbs, to our congregations and churchly institutions, and to the culture gaps that rend them.

There we will find folk who simply do not apprehend or inhabit a narratable world. Indeed, many do not know that anyone ever did. The reason so many now cannot "find their place" is that they are unaware of the possibility of a kind of world or society that could have such things as places, though they may recite, as a sort of mantra, memorized phrases about "getting my life together" and the like. There are now many who do not and cannot understand their lives as realistic narrative. John Cage or Frank

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stella; one of my suburban Minnesota students whose reality is rock music, his penis, and at the very fringes some awareness that to support both of these medical school might be nice; a New York street dude; the pillar of her congregation who one day casually reveals that of course she *believes* none of it, that her Christianity is a relativistic game that could easily be replaced altogether by some other religion or yoga—all inhabit a world of which no stories can be true.

IV

So how, with respect to "story," must the church's mission now be conducted? The prescription itself is obvious and simple, carrying it out hard and in some situations perhaps impossible.

Throughout modernity, the church has presumed that its mission was directed to persons who *already* understood themselves as inhabitants of a narratable world. Moreover, since the God of a narratable world is the God of Scripture, the church was also able to presume that the narrative sense people had antecedently tried to make of their lives had somehow to cohere with the particular story, "the gospel," that the church had to communicate. Somebody who could read Rex Stout or the morning paper with pleasure and increase of self-understanding was for that very reason taken as already situated to grasp the church's message (which did not of course mean that he or she would necessarily believe it). In effect, the church could say to her hearers: "You know that story you think you must be living out in the real world? We are here to tell you about its turning point and outcome."

But this is precisely what the postmodern church cannot presume. What then? The obvious answer is that if the church does not *find* her hearers antecedently inhabiting a narratable world, then the church must herself *be* that world.

The church has in fact had great experience of just this role. One of many analogies between postmodernity and dying antiquity—in which the church lived for her most creative period—is that the late antique world also insisted on being a meaningless chaos, and that the church had to save her converts by offering herself as the narratable world within which life could be lived with dramatic coherence. Israel had been the nation that lived a realistic narrative amid nations that lived otherwise; the church offered herself to the gentiles as their Israel. The church so constituted herself in her *liturgy*.

For the ancient church, the walls of the place of Eucharist, whether these were the walls of a basement or of Hagia Sophia or of an imaginary circle in the desert, enclosed a world. And the great drama of the Eucharist was the narrative life of that world. Nor was this a fictive world, for its drama is precisely the "real" presence of all reality's true author, elsewhere denied. The classic liturgical action of the church was not about anything else at all; it was itself the reality about which truth could be told.

In the postmodern world, if a congregation or churchly agency wants to be "relevant," here is the first step: it must recover the classic liturgy of the church, in all its dramatic density, sensual actuality, and brutal realism, and make this the one exclusive center of its life. In the postmodern world, all else must at best be decoration and more likely distraction.

Out there—and that is exactly how we must again begin to speak of the society in which the church finds itself—there is no narratable world. But absent a narratable world, the church's hearers cannot believe or even understand the gospel story—or any other momentous story. If the church is not herself a real, substantial, living world to which the gospel can be true, faith is quite simply impossible.

Protestantism has been modernity's specific form of Christianity. Protestantism supposed that addressees of the gospel already inhabited the narratable world in which stories like the gospel could be believed, and that we therefore could dismantle the gospel's own liturgical world, which earlier times of the church had created. Protestantism has from the beginning supposed that the real action is in the world, and that what happens "in church" can only be preparation to get back out into reality. This was always a wrong judgment—indeed a remarkable piece of naiveté—but the blunder is understandable and in the modern world Protestantism could, just barely, get away with it. In a postmodern world, those days are gone forever.

Of course ritual as such is not the point; the point is the church's reality as herself a specific real narrated world. Which leads to a further matter.

To be a real world for her members, and not just a ritual illusion, the church must pay the closest attention to the substance of her liturgical gatherings and to their constitutive language. If the church's interior drama is not fiction, this is because the subject of that drama is a particular God, the Creator-God who authors all reality. If liturgy is not to be sickly pretense, if it is to be real presence of reality's God, everything must enact the specific story Scripture actually tells about that particular God. Two polemical points here insist on hearing, and come together in a third.

Polemical point one: the story is not your story or my story or "his-story" or "her-story" or some neat story someone read or made up. The story of the sermon and of the hymns and of the processions and of the sacramental acts and of the readings is to be God's story, the story of the Bible. Preachers are the greatest sinners here: the text already is and belongs to the one true story, it does need to be helped out in this respect. What is said and enacted in the church

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must be with the greatest exactitude and faithfulness and exclusivity the story of creation and redemption by the God of Israel and Father of the risen Christ. As we used to say: Period.

Polemical point two: modern Christianity, i.e., Protestantism, has regularly substituted slogans for narrative, both in teaching and in liturgy. It has supposed that hearers already knew they had a story and even already knew its basic plot, so that all that needed to be done was to point up certain features of the story—that it is "justifying," or "liberating," or whatever. The supposition was always misguided, but sometimes the church got away with it. In the postmodern world, this sort of preaching and teaching and liturgical composition merely expresses the desperation of those who in their meaningless world can believe nothing but vaguely wish they could.

Now the synthetic polemical point: there *is* one slogan-like phrase that is precisely a maximally compressed version of the one God's particular story. This is the revealed name, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." It is thus no accident at all that in our postmodern situation, the struggle between realistic faith and religious wool-gathering settles into a struggle over this name. The triune name evokes God as the three actors of His one story, and places the three in their actual narrative relation. Substitutes do not and cannot do this; "Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier," for example, neither narrates nor specifically names, for creating, redeeming, and sanctifying are timelessly actual aspects of the biblical God's activity, and are moreover things that *all* putative gods somehow do. In the postmodern situation, we will easily recognize congregations and agencies that know what world they inhabit by their love and fidelity to the triune name; and we will recognize antiquated Protestantism by its uneasiness with the triune name.

V

So much for story. Now for *promise*. Here too modernity was constituted by secularization of an aspect of Christian faith. The gospel is ineradicably an eschatological message, it tells its story as the story of created time's end and fulfillment. Modernity's secularized version of eschatological faith was its notorious confidence in progress, and was constitutive for modernity's whole practice and self-understanding. In its liberal version, confidence in progress shaped Europe and founded the United States. In its Marxist and pre-Marxist versions, confidence in progress fueled the great modern revolutions.

In a world that was progressing, or thought it was, Protestantism supposed the church's role was to provide motivation and direction for movement that was anyway occurring. In the most recent and already rather quaint version of this supposition, it was said to be the church's role to look around the world to see where God was at work, and then jump in to help. This—again—was always a remarkable piece of naiveté, but occasionally someone got away with it.

The First World War terminated Western Europe's liberal faith in progress; and disastrous experiment has now terminated the Marxist version. America escaped the worst devastations of the wars and has always been more exclusively shaped by modernity than other nations, and so held on a couple of generations longer; now America too seems slowly to be accepting the evidence.

Modernity's hope was in progress; the model of this hope was biblical hope in God as the Coming One, the Eschatos. Modernity cannot hope in the biblical God, founded as it is in a declaration of independence from him. Therefore, when hope in progress has been discredited, modernity has no resource either for renewing it or for acquiring any other sort of hope. The mere negation of faith in progress is sheer lack of hope; and hopelessness is the very definition of postmodernism.

Much modernist/postmodernist literature and art is directly and thematically either lamentation about, or defiant proclamation of, hopelessness: promises, our artists tell us in drumbeat monotony, should not be made, because they cannot be kept. Promises, in the postmodern world, are inauthentic simply because they are promises, because they commit a future that is not ours to commit. Where the impossibility of promise appears less thematically and more formally, it runs together with the renunciation of plotted narrative instanced earlier: promises can be made only if reality is getting someplace, that is, if it has a plotted story.

And again, while the arts are diagnostic, the condition they reveal is the condition of our streets and institutions. The impossibility of promises is there our daily experience. And in this matter, we have a paradigm case, in which the whole situation is instantly manifest and which I need only name. There is a human promise that is the closest possible creaturely approach to unconditional divine promise, and that is therefore throughout Scripture the chosen analog of divine promise: the marital promise of faithfulness unto death. Among us, that promise has become a near impossibility, socially, morally, and even legally.

VI

So again, how, in a world that entertains no promises, is the church to speak her eschatological hope with any public plausibility? There is one line here that obviously must be followed: the church must herself be a communal world in which promises are made and kept. But this line has already been pursued with enormous energy by Stanley Hauerwas, whose work deserves its own study. Let me take the question in a different direction.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is the whole vision of an Eschaton that is now missing outside the church. The assembly of believers must therefore itself be the event in which we may behold what is to come. Nor is this necessity new in the life of the church. For what purpose, after all, do we think John the Seer recorded his visions?

If, in the *post*-modern world, a congregation or whatever wants to be "relevant," its assemblies must be unabashedly events of shared apocalyptic vision. "Going to church" must be a journey to the place where we will behold our destiny, where we will see what is to come of us. Modernity's version of Christianity—that is, Protestantism—has been shy of vision and apocalypse alike. Just so, its day is over. As before, I can see two aspects of the new mandate.

First and most obviously, preaching and teaching and hymns and prayers and processions and sacramental texts must no longer be shy about describing just what the gospel promises, what the Lord has in store. Will the city's streets be paved with gold? Modernity's preaching and teaching—and even its hymnody and sacramental texts—hastened to say, "Well, no, not really." And having said that, it had no more to say. In modern Christianity's discourse, the gospel's eschatology died the death of a few quick qualifications.

The truly necessary qualification is not that the City's streets will not be paved with real gold, but that gold as we know it is not real gold, such as the City will be paved with. What is the matter with gold anyway? Will goldsmiths who gain the Kingdom have nothing to do there? To stay with this one little piece of the vision, our discourse must learn again to revel in the beauty and flexibility and integrity of gold, of the City's true gold, and to say exactly why the world the risen Jesus will make must of course be golden, must be and will be beautiful and flexible and integral as is no earthly city. And so on and on.

Because Jesus lives to triumph, there will be the real Community, with its real Banquet in its real City amid its real Splendor, as no penultimate community or banquet or city or splendor is really just and loving or tasty or civilized or golden. The church has to rehearse that sentence in all her assemblings, explicitly and in detail.

Second, the church's assemblies must again become occasions of *seeing*. We are told by Scripture that in the Kingdom this world's dimness of sight will be replaced by, as the old theology said it, "beatific vision." It is a right biblical insight that God first of all *speaks* and that our community with him and each other is first of all that we *hear* him and speak to him. It does not, however, follow, as Protestantism has made it follow, that to listen and speak we must blind ourselves. In this age, accurate hearing is paired with dimmed vision; it is precisely a promised chief mark of the Eschaton that accurate hearing will then be accompanied by glorious sight. And in this age, the church must be the place where beatific vision is anticipated and trained.

Late antiquity suffered and lamented the same blindness with which postmodernity is afflicted, the same inability to see any Fulfillment up there before us. Gradually, as the church worked out the theology, the church made herself a place of such seeing. She did this with the icons of the East and the windows and statues of the West. Protestantism supposed that folk in the civil society already envisioned glorious Fulfillment, and needed no specific churchly envisioning, and therefore Protestantism for the most part eliminated the images and even where it retained them forgot how to use them. Protestantism's reliance on the world was here too an illusion, but here too an illusion it got away with for modernity's time. That time is over.

If we are in our time rightly to apprehend the eschatological reality of the gospel promise, we have to hear it with Christ the risen Lord visibly looming over our heads and with His living and dead saints visibly gathered around us. Above all, the church must celebrate the Eucharist as the dramatic depiction, and as the succession of tableaux, that it intrinsically is. How can we point our lives to the Kingdom's great Banquet, if its foretaste is spread before us with all the beauty of a McDonald's counter?

VII

A necessary afterword, lest all the above be misunderstood. It was modernity's great contribution to Christian history to have recognized the church's mandated preferential options for the poor and oppressed with a clarity previously cultivated only in the monastic orders. It was perhaps the real substance of Protestantism that it demanded that all believers live with the attention to justice and charity which had for centuries been demanded only of those under special vows. We must maintain modernity's insight. The church must indeed pursue God's action in the world.

But modernity's contribution will be lost if the church fails to notice that modernity is dying, and to face the new necessities mandated in that death. And *those* necessities—which I surely have not exhausted—are necessities of concretion and density and vision laid upon the life of the church within herself. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

King Lear Beyond Reason: Love and Justice in the Family

Mark R. Schwehn

The practice of combining love and justice in the governance of relationships between parents and children is crucial to the moral formation of the young. This balancing act also requires the most strenuous and careful exercise by those who would be good parents of the very moral virtues that they are striving to cultivate in their offspring. Moreover, the entire endeavor hangs on one of the oldest and most perplexing of all questions, the question of whether, and how, human excellence can be taught.

Most parents and children will, however, experience this large philosophical difficulty by living through a series of more immediate and personally focused dilemmas. Can parents encourage, nurture, and praise excellence in their children without at the same time making it seem as though love comes simply or mainly as the recognition of achievement? *Should* parental love be contingent to any degree upon performance? Can children ever cease their conflicting demands to be approved and appreciated for their merits and yet to be loved altogether regardless of them? Not all of us are parents, but we have all been children, and we might well ask ourselves whether our most "successful" efforts to make ourselves worthy of our parents' love have ever been anything but the hollowest of triumphs. "Do you love me for myself or for what I have been able to accomplish?" How many of us have not, at some time or another, sought an answer to this question by devising tests of love for our parents?

When it comes to such questions, we all need the most profound guidance. Hence we must turn to the poets, for in matters of this sort, we need a sentimental education, a course of instruction that engages the feelings and the imagination along with reason. The very best poetry does not simply instruct us *and* move us; it instructs us *by* moving us. For our purposes here, one of the poems that most movingly and most truly gathers up the great themes of love and justice is Shakespeare's *King Lear*. One character in particular—the Duke of Gloucester's elder son, Edgar—and especially one speech made by Edgar toward the end of Act V, provide an especially useful focus for considering two related matters: first, the several difficulties involved in managing a union of love and justice in relationships between parents and children; and second, the several ways in which the best dramatic literature serves as a uniquely powerful resource for thinking through these and other matters of vital ethical importance.

MARK R. SCHWEHN *is Dean of Christ College at Valparaiso University and author of* Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation *(Oxford University Press).*

II

Edgar's speech (Act V, Scene iii) is the story of a life's journey:

> List a brief tale;
> And when 'tis told, O, that my heart would burst!
> The bloody proclamation to escape
> That followed me so near—O, our lives' sweetness,
> That we the pain of death would hourly die
> Rather than die at once!—taught me to shift
> Into a madman's rags, t' assume a semblance
> That very dogs disdained: and in this habit
> Met I my father with his bleeding rings,
> Their precious stones new lost; became his guide,
> Led him, begged for him, saved him from despair;
> Never—O fault!—revealed myself unto him,
> Until some half-hour past, when I was armed,
> Not sure, though hoping, of this good success,
> I asked his blessing, and from first to last

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Told him our pilgrimage. But his flawed heart—
Alack, too weak the conflict to support—
'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
Burst smilingly.

The scene between Edgar and Gloucester that this speech describes does not, like the earlier and closely parallel scene between Cordelia and her father, King Lear, end with full recognition and reconciliation but with the death of Edgar's father Gloucester. We may be tempted to think that Shakespeare chose not to represent directly this latter scene of Edgar and Gloucester as part of the dramatic action of the play precisely because of its relative incompletion and failure. The reason for Shakespeare's refusal lies deeper, however. Edgar's telling of the tale that includes his recognition of a serious flaw in the way he sought to restore himself to his father's good graces is much more important than the scene of that incompletion and failure would itself have been. In the telling of his and Gloucester's pilgrimage, Edgar is still in the process of learning the difficult lessons that the audience, through Edgar, are learning for themselves. In other words, the dramatic action here is just this learning process and not the narrated events that gave rise to it.

What exactly does Edgar learn? Edgar is the elder and the legitimate son of the Earl of Gloucester. At the beginning of the play, his younger and illegitimate brother Edmund has recently returned from an absence of nine years, and at once contrives to win the inheritance that rightfully belongs to Edgar. By the use of a forged letter, numerous slanders, and other more delicate and sinister stratagems, Edmund convinces Gloucester that his beloved son Edgar is plotting to kill him. Whereupon Gloucester proclaims Edgar a traitor, disowns him, disinherits him, bars all escape routes, and summons all the powers at his disposal to seek Edgar out and kill him. Edmund has in the meantime also duped Edgar. Pretending to be his brother's ally and protector, Edmund informs Edgar that their father has flown into an inexplicable rage against him. He arranges for Edgar's escape from Gloucester's castle, and he urges Edgar to be armed against the very forces that Edmund has encouraged Gloucester to unleash against him. The wily villainy of Edmund is matched only by the astonishing credulity of both Edgar and Gloucester. Banished from his home and fearing for his life, Edgar "shifts into the madman's rags" he mentions in the speech quoted above. He mortifies his body, ties his hair in knots, covers himself with grime, and goes about in the guise of a blithering beggar.

The summary of this entire complex development takes Edgar but five and one half lines. Notice that the brief tale omits much (no mention of Edmund), and that it pretends to explain simply and directly more than in fact it does explain. Thus, for example, the "bloody proclamation" might by itself suffice to explain why Edgar needs to disguise himself, but it does not explain why he chooses the kind of disguise he does—"t' assume a semblance that very dogs disdained." As he speaks, however, the deeper source of his choice of disguise seems to dawn upon Edgar. It is, after all, *his father's* "bloody proclamation" (the double entendre is intentional here, for, as we shall see, Gloucester thinks of his paternity primarily, sometimes exclusively, in terms of blood and law; thus, the proclamation is bloody both in the sense of its threatening Edgar's blood and in the sense of its being pronounced by Edgar's own blood) that inflicts "hourly" upon Edgar "the pain of death." So his disguise is no disguise at all; it is rather the representation of what Edgar most truly feels himself to be. Or, more exactly, Edgar's disguise both conceals and reveals him. The beggar's rags may conceal him from his father's agents, but they at the same time reveal what Edgar really feels himself to be—a rejected, despised, and half-crazed wretch.

Perhaps Edgar is someone who is ready to believe the worst about himself. How else explain his readiness to accept rather than to challenge his father's wrathful proclamation against his life? Perhaps at some level of his being, Edgar believes that he deserves judgment and punishment. Perhaps he thinks, or at least he feels, that his father's proclamation *is* justified. Perhaps his father's feeling about him is all that matters, regardless of whether or not it is "justified." Remember that Edgar does not know for a long time what we know from the beginning—that Gloucester's wrath is the result of his credulity in the face of Edmund's deceptions. In any event, the trust and the understanding between father and son must be very fragile in order for them both to fall prey so easily to Edmund's plot. How secure are any of us in the affections of our parents? Is there not something about our condition that leads to isolation, separation, and estrangement even from those we love the most?

To ask these questions is perhaps to move, like Edgar, too quickly from the particularities of his own relationship to his father to a more general statement about the human condition ("O, *our* lives' sweetness . . ."). Nevertheless, we can, even at this early point of our interpretation of Edgar's speech, begin to see what the pilgrimage described by Edgar is all about and how it is that our attention to that pilgrimage can move us to see something about the conjoint operation of love and justice in the actions of a parent. Edgar's and Gloucester's pilgrimage does not tell us simply or even mainly about what happened or about what will happen between a particular parent and a particular child. It does, however, show us (by making us "see the world feelingly") what happens when a child has been unjustly despised and rejected by a parent. Edgar's long endeav-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or with his father is about the tremendous pain all of us have known if ever and whenever we have felt rejected by those whose love means the most to us. Moreover, it shows us how, once rejected, we have grown to feel especially unworthy of regard, much less affection, from our parents precisely because their verdict upon us has made us feel the way Edgar appears. And this astonishing process of a parent's love or its withdrawal effecting before our eyes the very thing that in part gave rise to it teaches us something about parental love that we might otherwise overlook—that it has the power to bestow, even to create, worth and value in its object. "Edgar I nothing am" (II, iii): to ask whether this is a subjective or an objective judgment is to misconceive both the character and his situation.

In some such condition of convicted unworthiness, Edgar encounters his father. Gloucester has fallen prey to more of Edmund's machinations. The poor old man has been blinded and cast out of his own castle to endure a terrible storm on the heath and to "feel his way to Dover" where he expects to rendezvous with the forces allied with King Lear and led by Lear's daughter Cordelia. Then, according to the account in his speech, Edgar "became his guide, led him, begged for him, saved him from despair. . . ." One of these efforts to "save" his father involves an astonishing deception. Edgar convinces the suicidal Gloucester that he has led him to the brink of a precipice, and after the poor man flops over onto the ground (for there is no precipice), Edgar assumes yet another guise in which he tries to convince his father that, even though he has really plunged down several fathoms from the brink of a cliff, he has been miraculously spared by the just gods above. Not until he has taken on a few more disguises, not until he puts his father through several more ordeals, does Edgar reveal himself to Gloucester and ask his blessing. But by then it is too late. Before Gloucester can pronounce his blessing upon Edgar, the old man finally dies.

Again, perhaps the most important thing about Edgar's account of all of this is what it omits. It omits the fact that when Edgar encounters the bleeding and blinded visage of his father, he overhears Gloucester repent of his wrath against him. At the very moment Gloucester was blinded, he learned that Edgar had been true to him and Edmund false. Indeed, Gloucester says within Edgar's overhearing, "Might I but live to see thee in my touch, I'd say I had eyes again" (IV, i). Gloucester, in other words, is quite clear about the terms of his own salvation. He does not need to be guided through a long pilgrimage, tested, deceived, and "saved from despair" through cunning stratagems. Instead, he needs only to "see Edgar" in a deeper way, a way that is anchored in sentiment and understanding rather than merely blood and law.

Edgar has other plans for his father, however, largely because he has other plans for himself. He will not give his father an opportunity to make amends until he has revealed himself as worthy of his father's love (the logic of revelation here will be particularly difficult for a son "in disguise" before a father who is blind). He will literally win his way back into his father's affections by offering proof of his merits. He will found love upon justice. He will get love the old fashioned way: he will earn it. Edgar is quite explicit about these plans:

> Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray [reveal]
> When false opinion whose wrong thoughts defile thee,
> In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee. (III, vi)

If parental love were simply a matter of true opinion and the distribution of affection according to merit, there would be good sense in Edgar's strategy. But the plan fails to reckon with three facts of life made visible to the audience by the dramatic coincidence of Edgar's "disguise" and Gloucester's blindness. First, though the "logic" of both parental and filial love certainly involves matters of blood, law, and merit, it also involves matters of trust, perception, and sentiment—not the sorts of things that can be quickly repaired in a moment of triumphant disclosure by "just proof" and "true opinion." Second, the logic of revelation or disclosure in matters of love between parents and children is extremely problematic, since the children will to some extent be what their parents perceive them to be. Third, given that parental love is both immense and to some extent a gift, a child can never reach the point when his or her achievements "merit" such love.

Edgar's actions show us what happens to someone who fails to reckon with these latter and, to the audience, obvious difficulties. He becomes egotistical and cruel, for one thing. Thus, when he first sees his blinded father, his first thought is of himself, of *his* plans, of *his* fate. "I am worse than e'er I was," he says (IV, i). This egotism quickly gives way to cruelty. For Edgar, knowing that his father "would say that he had eyes again" if only he could see Edgar in his touch, nonetheless remains disguised. He is thereby implicated in Gloucester's continuing blindness.* This egotism and cruelty are wholly understandable,

* Stanley Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love," in Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 54-57. I have learned a great deal about the matters I discuss here from this splendid and lengthy essay. Though I most often find myself in some disagreement with Cavell about the play, his essay takes up almost all of the issues I discuss here, and readers should certainly read it if they wish to think further about these matters. I have been more informed and stimulated by this essay than by any other piece of criticism of *Lear* and I wish to acknowledge my debt to Cavell here.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

given the nature of Edgar's project as outlined by his speech in Act V. He is nowhere near the "good success" that he hopes for. He is not armed, and he has not yet vanquished the chief rival for his father's love, his brother Edmund. But this is what he proposes to do; then and only then will he be ready to reveal himself. Until that time he must remain in disguise. Those who seek to earn love must wait until they are at the height of their powers before they lay claim to it. And this moment never quite comes, as it never quite comes for Edgar. So he compromises. He reveals himself to Gloucester fully hoping for success against Edmund, but prior to the point when he has attained it. But it is too late, as it must always be too late for those who insist upon complete success. The quest for complete worthiness as the condition of love can end only in death. No wonder he thinks first of himself when he sees his father. Edgar really is worse than e'er he was. For since he really does plan eventually to impress Gloucester with his worthiness, he must do so only when he feels impressive. And his beggar's rags bespeak a sense of self that is most unworthy indeed.

Another thing that we learn by seeing Edgar's project miscarry is that those who seek to earn love are often oblivious to it when it is freely offered. Again and again Gloucester blesses him, but Edgar does not hear. Before Gloucester attempts suicide, he prays, and at the conclusion of the prayer he exclaims, "If Edgar live, O bless him!" (IV, vi). Later, after Gloucester has begun to suspect Edgar's charades, he bids him a temporary farewell by saying, "Grace go with you, sir" (V, ii). But Edgar is too busy with his plans to pay attention. When he finally asks for what has already been given but not accepted, the request is as superfluous as it is untimely.

We learn finally that those who seek to earn parental love and who, like Edgar, thereby make its attainment impossibly difficult become deeply self-deceived. Edgar really believes that he is concealing his identity, the true inner sense of his own unworthiness, in order to protect and save Gloucester. But Edgar is really protecting himself. Those who seek to win the love of those others who really matter the most to them can so easily convince themselves that deception is a strategy undertaken for the good of the deceived rather than for the protection of the deceiver. We may even suggest that the most common fantasy of the disgraced person is this, namely, that in withholding the truth about himself from those whose love he most seeks and needs, he is really protecting them, whereas in fact he is protecting himself from having to take the immense risk of facing these others as he really knows himself and feels himself to be. Thus, what begins as estrangement from others quickly becomes, under the pressure of the endeavor to earn love, first deception and then self-deception.

We can now perhaps begin to see that Shakespeare really does show us, in the character of Edgar, what happens to those who seek to earn parental love. Yes, self-mutilated children feigning madness are rare things, but persons of low self-worth seeking vainly to achieve a kind of worthiness in order to merit affection are altogether too common. Yes, halting and pathetic pilgrimages to Dover are not to be seen every day, but lifetimes spent in living through disguises, deceptions, and self-deceptions are common enough and pathetic enough. And yes, sword fights fought to the death between siblings in order to secure sole or at least primary possession of a parent's love are seldom seen but everywhere imagined and commonly approximated.

All of this seems rather grim, but there may be hope, even for Edgar. In seeking vainly to teach and save his father he is himself educated in the ways of justice and love. And we see the first small fruits of that education in the very speech we have been analyzing. Two small words in that speech have rather large implications. "O fault!" Edgar exclaims in the course of admitting his delay in revealing himself to his father. He has come to understand that telling his father a true story of what the two of them had endured together and inflicted upon one another was a far better way both of expressing filial love and of asking for a blessing than vanquishing a brother or standing in full armor and at full strength before his father. And he frames the narration of his telling of that story so as to show us how deeply he has come to identify with his father. The story he tells Gloucester of their pilgrimage together causes the old man's heart to burst, and Edgar wishes that this would happen to him after he finishes telling the story of the same pilgrimage to the remaining vestiges of Lear's kingdom.

Though he has already learned much about the dark ways of love and justice, he is still perhaps too much like Gloucester, still not ready to occupy the position that he will occupy at the end of the play. But he will lose another father. And that loss will teach both him and us some more lessons about love and justice. These lessons will dawn upon us as we discover how and why Edgar has become less and less like Gloucester and more and more like his other father, King Lear.

III

Few critics seem to have noticed the significance of the fact that Edgar is Lear's godson. But on the basis of our discussion of the play thus far, this detail is extremely important both to the central themes of love and justice and to the structure of the play's dramatic action. When Regan asks of Gloucester, "What, did my father's godson seek your life?/He whom my father named, your Edgar?" (II, i), she suggests that though it is shocking enough to imagine intended patricide, it is more shocking still to imag-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ine that Lear's own godson would plan such a thing. Of course the ironies here are legion (Is Regan's shock perhaps feigned, given what she is plotting in the very scene of this disclosure about Edgar?), forcing us again to recognize the unfathomable character of evil. But the way in which this major disclosure is phrased—". . . *my* father named, *your* Edgar"—also forces upon us the sense that Lear is deeply implicated in Edgar's life and Edgar in Lear's in ways that we must seek to understand if we are not to miss many of the things the play has to teach us about love between parents and children.

In the same speech in which Edgar reveals his plans to reconcile with his father through "just proof," he notices a striking comparison between himself and King Lear. "He childed as I fathered," Edgar says of Lear, meaning, presumably, that just as Lear sired children who turned for inscrutable reasons against him, so he, Edgar, "fathered" Gloucester, who, for equally inscrutable reasons, turned against him (III, vi). But if we bear in mind the fact that Edgar is Lear's godson, deeper affinities emerge along the lines suggested by Edgar's observation. Just as Gloucester had two sons and was bound to one, according to Gloucester himself, only by blood and nature and to the other by blood and law, so Edgar had two fathers, bound to one by both nature and law and to the other by (apparently) nurture and character. If we bear these complex connections in mind, we can learn a great deal about the several aspects of paternal and filial love—nature or blood, law or convention, and nurture or character—by observing the ordinarily conjoint aspects of these loves in their isolated operation.

Gloucester's weakness and credulity stem from an imbalance in him between his carnal longings and his dispositions to be loyal and devoted to his king. Edmund seems to inherit only the blood lust, such that nature becomes his goddess, his only source of attachment to his father, and the engine of his blind ambition. Edgar inherits a preoccupation with law, legitimacy, and, as we have seen, justice. Altogether absent from Gloucester's love for either Edmund or Edgar is any understanding of who they are, any grasp of, much less any appreciation for, their characters. To witness the drama between Gloucester and Edmund is to witness the power of the blood tie and its horrifying inadequacy as the sole basis for paternity and filial devotion. To witness the long pilgrimage of Gloucester and Edgar is, as we have seen, to fathom the importance of law and justice as an aspect of paternal and filial devotion, even as we grow to feel the sad inadequacy of justice as the sole basis for paternal and filial love. Gloucester seems simply to lurch between nature and law as defining his paternity. He sometimes speaks, especially regarding Edmund, as though blood were an all-powerful tie between father and son. At other times, especially regarding Edgar, he speaks as though the law were strong enough to revoke nature itself, to sever the tie of blood and the deep affections that go with it. "I had a son/ Now *outlawed*/ from my blood; he sought my life/ But lately, very late. I *loved* him, friend./ No father his son dearer" (III, iv, emphases added).

Again, discernment of his sons' characters is altogether absent. Thus, the character of Gloucester's recognition, when it finally comes, is not simply that "Edgar was abused" but that the whole character of his fatherhood was deficient such that Edgar *could* have been abused. He needs, not repentance for a single piece of bad judgment, but the power of discerning character and the motivation to do so. Gloucester's restoration (as far as it can go) is completed, then, before Edgar encounters him. For Gloucester already "sees" exactly what he must do and be, and his despair is linked directly and completely to the fact that he believes he will have no such opportunity.

But what is absent in Gloucester is wholly present in Edgar's other father, Lear. He not only names Edgar, he knows who Edgar is. Indeed Edgar is Lear himself, possessed of the same great fault as a child that undoes Lear as a parent. When Gloucester first encounters Edgar "disguised" as Tom o'Bedlam, his "son came then into his mind" as the embodiment of wretchedness (IV, i), but when Lear in his "madness" first encounters Edgar as Tom o'Bedlam, he *recognizes* him for what he is, a "man of justice!" (III, vi). Lear, the parent, tries, at the beginning of the play, to found justice upon love, to divide the kingdom in accordance with the extent to which each of his children loves him. Throughout the opening actions of the play, i.e., throughout the first two acts, Lear thinks of love in quantitative terms (as when he equates the amount of love that Regan and Goneril feel for him with the number of knights they will permit him to retain) as a basis for a rough kind of distributive justice. The more you love, the more material goods you deserve. Edgar wants to found love upon justice, as we have seen. He wants to earn, through deeds and other "proofs" of his worth, the affections of his father. Both of these projects drastically miscarry, but the son, partly by watching his two fathers expose in body and in speech the dark anatomy of love and justice in all their forms (IV, vi), partly by coming to see the faults in his own strategy with Gloucester, and partly by feeling the successive shocks of losing first Gloucester and then his other father Lear (who *is* then legally Edgar's father), becomes by the end of the play prepared to rule over Lear's tragic legacy.*

The more we come to understand Lear, the more

* Ever since A. C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*, discussion of *King Lear* has been to some extent skewed by an almost universal disposition to see the subplot involving Gloucester, Edmund, and Edgar as simply a repetition of the theme of the main story. For Bradley, the characters of the main plot and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we come to understand Edgar. And conversely. We may wonder, for example, why Lear should unthinkingly assume that Poor Tom has been reduced to such a state because he has given everything away to his daughters (III, iv). In seeking to answer this question, we come to see that Lear's own obsession with filial ingratitude suggests that he was the kind of father who invariably distributed favors and affections to his children *for the sake of* a return to himself rather than for the sake of the children themselves. Asking them to do the same (to love him or to profess love for him *in order* to secure favors, as Lear does at the beginning of the play) seems perfectly reasonable, since Lear has in effect been doing something like that with his daughters all along. To expect gratitude as the proper response to gracious love is one thing. To love in a way that aims at gratitude is quite another: that way madness lies. No wonder, then, that Lear can so readily "recognize" Edgar as someone obsessed with his own crazed project of earning affection. Both men learn from opposite sides of the problem (the would-be lover and would-be beloved; the parent and the child) that the truest love must not be motivated by the prospect of returns. Lear learns from the fact that his love for his daughters was always so motivated and he was hence driven mad by filial ingratitude, Edgar, from the fact that his project was, as we have seen, doomed to failure both by its own logic and its own psycho-logic. To endeavor to earn unconditional love is a contradiction in terms, one that deepens the very longings it seeks to satisfy.

In order for Lear and Edgar to lead us to feel our way through to these harsh truths about love and justice, parents and children, we must see them as they see themselves, as reverse mirror images of one another. The fool prepares us for this seeing. He sings to Lear that "Fathers that wear rags/ Do make their children blind" (II, iv). This ditty plays upon Lear's obsessive conviction that poverty in parents will lead to indifferent blindness in their children, whereas riches will lead to kindness. But Edgar, as we have seen, discovers a more profound truth in the exact reverse of this ditty: Fathers that are blind do make their children wear rags. For the audience as for the characters, matters of love and justice come to be more and more deeply bound up with matters of knowledge and perception.

---

those of the sub-plot paralleled one another exactly—Lear: Gloucester: Regan/Goneril : Edmund :: Cordelia : Edgar. Because he was so insistent upon these exact parallels, Bradley believed that the "double-action" of the play was its "principal structural weakness." The five characters who were "technically of the first importance" included Lear, his three daughters, and Edmund. Edgar was "technically about as important as Laertes." I would argue that once the focus shifts from the Lear/Gloucester axis to where it properly belongs, to the Lear/Edgar axis, the sense of both the structure and the meaning of the play changes dramatically. The quotations here are from *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London, 1952), 254-56, 262.

IV

We have, perhaps, seen enough of *Lear* thus far to "see feelingly" that paternal and filial love involve justice, involve ties of blood, and involve perception of and appreciation for character. And we have learned as well that the operation of any one of these aspects to the utter exclusion of the others can lead to hideous results. By focusing our attention upon Edgar and his relationships to his two fathers, we have also been able to discern how crucial it is to construe these complicated matters not in terms of static concepts but in terms of changing patterns of human affection and regard over the course of a lifetime, or a pilgrimage. The failure to emphasize this crucial longitudinal feature of parental and filial love has led even some of the best philosophers to offer inadequate or unnecessarily perplexing accounts of these matters of love and justice between parents and children. To see how and why this is so, let us turn briefly to Aristotle's account of parental and filial love in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Aristotle says of the relationship between philia and justice (and he treats filial and parental love as special instances of philia) that "when men are friends they have no need of justice." Yet Aristotle never quite fully explains why this should be so. Is it so because philia in the highest and best sense of the word is superior to justice in that it includes the complete fulfillment of demands between friends for fair and equal treatment? Or do friends have no need of justice because justice and philia, though distinct and sometimes conflicting, are coextensive, i.e., they address the same range of concerns in different ways and from different motives such that friendship is preferable? When Aristotle takes his examples from friendships among persons who are not akin to one another, the former seems to be the case, that is, justice between such friends is both completed and superseded by philia. But when Aristotle takes his examples from friendships among persons who are akin to one another, the latter seems to be the case. "[I]njustice increases by being exhibited towards those who are friends in a fuller sense; e.g., it is a more terrible thing to defraud a comrade than a fellow citizen, more terrible not to help a brother than a stranger, and *more terrible to wound a father than anyone else.* And the demands for justice seem to increase with the intensity of the friendship, which implies that friendship and justice exist between the same persons *and have an equal extension*" (emphases added).

Difficulties such as these arise in Aristotle's discussion of philia almost every time he considers friendship among persons who are akin. The point here is not to fault Aristotle for these seeming quandaries, for the same difficulties appear in *King Lear*. It is as though filial and parental love cannot be fath-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

omed by considering these loves exclusively in terms of philia, eros, or charity, or even in terms of some combination of them. One can perhaps only watch and be affected into understanding. For example, Aristotle says, in speaking about friendships between persons who are unequal to one another with respect to virtue, that in "*all* such friendships implying inequality the love also should be proportional, i.e., the better should be more loved than he loves . . . ; for when the love is in proportion to the merit of the parties, then in a sense arises equality, which is certainly held to be characteristic of friendship" (emphasis added). It would seem that, on the basis of this analysis, children should love their parents more than parents love their children if there is to be a friendship in the highest and best sense among parents and children.

On the other hand, elsewhere in his discussion of friendship, when Aristotle elaborates more clearly the character of filial love, he seems again to contradict himself. He reiterates his earlier claim that the friendship of children to parents is "a relation to them as to something good and superior," but he also explains why parents in fact love their children more than children do their parents. For first of all, parents love children "as being a part of themselves"; second, as ones who know the children better than the children know their parents; and third, as ones who love their children for a longer period of time, for "parents love their children as soon as these are born, but children love their parents only after time has elapsed and they have acquired understanding or the power of discrimination by the sense." Under these circumstances children cannot possibly "equalize" the relationship by loving more; instead, they must "do what they can" to honor those who "are the causes of their being and of their nourishment and of their education from their birth. . . ."

King Lear dramatizes these conundrums from the opening scene through to the end of the play. Thus, Cordelia's opening speech to Lear in the first scene expresses her love for her father in precisely the terms Aristotle uses to describe those filial obligations that derive from the "greatest benefits" conferred upon children by their parent. "Good my lord./ You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I/ Return those duties back as are right fit./ Obey you, love you, and most honor you" (I, i). Yet by the end of the play Cordelia has more than "equalized" the relationship between herself and her father. A love in the highest and best sense between Lear and Cordelia involves works of supererogation by Cordelia that are the very image of charity, as Lear has become the image of patience (literally Cordelia's patient). Her moving love for her father has come to exceed his for her, and this seems just and fitting in part because of the magnitude of the action.

We sense, in the cases of Lear, Gloucester, and their noblest children, that we have witnessed lifetimes unfolding before us, pilgrimages if you will. We learn from all of these characters in action that love between parents and children cannot be "equalized" by loving "in proportion to the merit of the parties" at some precise moment in time. When asked to capture filial love in speech, Cordelia speaks fittingly and truly of her duties, even as she intimates the dangers inherent in any implicitly quantitive understanding of love by speaking of giving half of her love to her husband, half to Lear. But over the course of a *lifetime*, a pilgrimage, the love between the best parents and the best children can be and often is "equalized." So Aristotle's seemingly perplexing statements are not perhaps as perplexing as they first appeared to be. Between parents and children, love is a matter of living in a loving manner *over time*: "When children render to parents what they ought to render to those who brought them into the world, and parents render what they should to their children, the friendship of such persons will be abiding and excellent." *At times*, there is need for justice; *over time*, duty and love become one and the same.

Even so, we live from day to day, and we have seen from the greatly disturbing examples of Lear and Edgar that justice is a necessary part not only of parental love but also of filial love. Yes, parents must show justice in their dealings with their children, especially in that part of the parental task that involves discipline, but children must also practice justice toward their parents in that their characters are involved, along with blood and law, with their parents' love for them.

But if the mingling of love and justice is necessary, is it necessarily tragic? This finally is the great question *Lear* forces upon us. Edgar's and Lear's great suffering would seem to suggest that the need to mingle justice and love in parenthood cannot help but lead to a wide variety of tragic outcomes. Cordelia's splendid example suggests that the tragic outcomes can be prevented if and only if parental and filial love partake to some extent of charity. This seems to me perhaps the most important lesson the play suggests to us.

Though the world of *King Lear* is finally a bleakly pagan one, its characters articulate a variety of theological convictions that are informed by and that in turn inform their more human loves. Thus, it does not or it should not surprise us to find that Gloucester's gods are "wanton" and that they manipulate, even kill, human beings "for their sport" (IV, i). We have seen how and why Edmund regards nature as his goddess. And we find what we would expect to find given our analysis of Lear and Edgar, namely, that both of them insist against all appearances that the gods are finally just, that justice is the supreme theological virtue. Indeed, both men go to great and sometimes grotesque lengths to "show the heavens more just" (III, iv), to convince others, especially

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gloucester in the case of Edgar, that the gods are not arbitrary but that they operate according to strict principles of reward and punishment according to merit. Nowhere in any of these men's theologies is there a place for a deity who "maketh his rain to fall upon the evil and upon the good," who loves unconditionally, who, like Cordelia, remains faithful without any cause or reason for doing so.

Absent any such deity, absent any divine example that might inspire and enable charity as at least another aspect of the love between parents and children, the several tragic dynamics of love and justice continue even to the very end of the play. Edgar, as we have seen, has surely risen in both stature and understanding. He comes to recognize that in matters of filial love, at least, we should "speak what we feel" and so reveal ourselves to our parents instead of being driven forever by the need first to achieve what we ought to achieve in order to earn their admiration. Moreover, his last words show us that he has grown to appreciate the magnificence that was there in his godfather and to measure himself against it. Left with the vestiges of a "gored state," shattered by the loss of both of his fathers in quick succession, and admitting that both the power and the range of his discernment will never equal theirs, Edgar must nevertheless resign himself and his generation to a comparatively brief and cheerless life, partly because, in failing properly to regard their parents, they have been responsible for their sufferings:

> The weight of this sad time we must obey,
> Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
> The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
> Shall never see so much, nor live so long. (V, iii)

Absent charity, there are no grounds for hope.

Yet we do, of course, have Cordelia. Unlike Edgar, she directly hears her father disown her, disclaiming all of his "paternal care, propinquity, and property of blood" (I, i). Yet throughout most of the play, greatly present in her absence from the action, Cordelia does what she resolved to do from the moment of her first aside: she loves and is silent. She loves simply, and she simply loves. And most unlike Edgar, Cordelia *loves* when love is not justified at all, whereas Edgar cannot *accept love* even when, from Gloucester's standpoint at least, that love is "justified," i.e., stemming from the correction of a prior error in judgment. We have tried to understand the sources of this refusal. From Edgar's perspective, Gloucester's love would be a kind of charity, and this is why he cannot bear it. Indeed, Edgar is the very kind of "extreme case" that C. S. Lewis, in *The Four Loves*, used to demonstrate "how difficult it is to receive, and to go on receiving a love that does not depend on our own attraction."

Unlike the imperfect reconciliation between Edgar and Gloucester, the one between Cordelia and her father is almost unspeakably beautiful. Lear has become the very image of patience and she the very image of charity. That all of this does nothing to prevent her fate or her father's is beside the point. The reconciliation takes place between the two of them, not between them and the world. According to the vast majority of contemporary critics, *King Lear* simply cannot be in any strong sense a "Christian" play, for charity neither redeems the world nor does it even save its only clear embodiment, Cordelia. But the play is most Christian in just exactly this respect. Its unflinching attention to the way the world really works does not permit us to imagine either that charity redeems the world or that it can be in any sense a fit basis for political rule. On this side of eternity, there are at best fleeting though magnificent moments of glad grace, such as the one we witness between Lear and Cordelia. Although such moments are vastly more redemptive than anything else in the world of *Lear*, they are finally unworldly, in the world but not of it. The best the world can give us is a justice that is blind and that abides only so long as it *remains* blind. The best that the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Jesus gives us is a love that sees and that nevertheless abides forever. This charity is truly redemptive, but it is more than human flesh can bear for long.

V

Telling stories and seeing plays (presuming, of course, that these are the right stories and the right plays at the right time) are far better ways toward understanding and even managing these matters of love and justice than any number of other strategies often thought to be superior for such purposes (therapy, life experiences, support groups, etc.). It is finally Edgar's *telling* of his and Gloucester's pilgrimage together that moves his father to that point of *joy* and grief (a combination of feelings very different from despair) that is fitting for one who has come at last to see the world feelingly. Moreover, the story has an immediate and astonishing effect upon the seemingly impervious and unredeemable Edmund: "This speech of yours hath moved me, and shall perchance do good . . ." (V, iii). Soon thereafter, the formative power of Edgar's brief tale prevails, at least temporarily, over Edmund's animal nature. As Edmund faces his own death, he strives to save Lear and Cordelia, and in this effort he vindicates the capacity of narrative to move and change us. "I pant for life, some good I mean to do/ Despite of mine own nature" (V, iii). Finally, our seeing Edgar's story and the others in *King Lear* moves us to understand the visions, wordless discernings, disguises, longings, refusals, blood-lusts, fears, rivalries, hopes, blessings, mistakes, sorrows, apprehensions, and "touching" moments of grace that are all a part of the lived experience of filial and parental love. Ethics may be final-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ly a matter of perception, of seeing the human world aright, and perception in matters of love and justice just is a matter of seeing the world feelingly.

And *seeing* the world feelingly may be the *only* way to grasp the major lessons of *Lear*. Charity and grace, after all, defy reason, at least the concept of reason that was prevalent among Shakespeare's contemporaries and that still prevails among many today. From Luther to Hobbes, reason was understood to be a reckoning of sums (Hobbes), a kind of calculation of merits and demerits, linked invariably to some kind of rule or law (Luther). Reason always reckons (Hobbes), and the law always condemns (Luther). Charity, since it is contrary to reason under this description, cannot be both authentically and fully conveyed by appeals to reason. It requires at least image, example, story, and a receptive form of cognition that sees the world feelingly in order to be comprehended and infused within us.

If we are lucky enough to have the right parents, whose love for us includes a measure of that love which passes all understanding, and if we are able to feel our way with them into the right stories, we just may be spared some of the needless anguish of an Edgar or a Gloucester or a Lear. These characters will, in any event, always be there for us to guide and lead, maybe even to save us from despair, as we make our own pilgrimage. FT

Bat

I hang upsidedown from the roof of your skull
sleeping—my wings crossed over me
like Pharaoh's arms, locking in a wisdom

millennial sands have leached and buried.
We are here by the thousands.
Light tilted upwards stirs

us in a dark hoodoo: ripples of crepe,
eyes like red sequins,
fangs that glitter heliophobic.

One detaches, drops,
in wild loops describes the light,
shrieking a high staccato,

reading your shape off the wall.
Turning out the light, you feel
the air stir as he swoops

close, and crawl out, anxious
for the sun's sharp definitions,
the sky's bowl of consciousness.

Meanwhile, the effigy of a bishop
with his cope about his shoulders
in rigid half-sleep, I wait

for the night, when like an afterthought
I follow where you toss in the sheets,
in the quick inaudible voice

of sonar, zero in on your dream.
Eyes twitching, you feel a peculiar
weightlessness. Your hands grow thin

and long, the moonlight showing through
as you hold them over the world
in a kind of benediction. Gliding,

you hear each small lament,
the mole's grief, the mouse's fear,
the trembling mouth of the grub.

You circle that chalky face
the white zero, the bullseye—
and, at last, caught in its ring

plunge, head rimmed with fire
all night until the stars
fall, too faint to be heard,

until with a short swoop and silent
cry you return to the cave
and fold upsidedown with the others

to share in a sleepy murmur
secrets you hide from the day
like dark cells clustered in a brain.

Robert Siegel

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Evangelizing Liberalism

M. B. Handspicker

In the March issue of First Things, Benton Johnson, Dean R. Hoge, and Donald A. Luidens addressed the question of the decline of mainline churches. One basic question, however, remains unanswered, namely, how *do* we deal with the issue of truth in a pluralistic society? In other words, after the Enlightenment, how can religious truth be made to serve in the creation of strong religious communities?

Messrs. Johnson, Hoge, and Luidens took me back to the experience I had working with military chaplains. For many years I taught a course in the Naval and the Air Force Chaplains' schools titled "Ministry in a Pluralistic Society." With the Navy I taught the "advanced" course for men (and finally women) who had been in ten or more years and were senior chaplains; with the Air Force I taught the "basic" course, for men and women who were just undertaking the calling of chaplaincy. I soon discovered that my tasks in the two groups were opposite.

In the "basic" course I had to teach my students how to get along with one another despite their differences. To some extent this meant helping them to temper the exclusiveness of the truth claims of their respective traditions—at least enough so that they could meet others as human beings, something they after all had to learn to do in order to minister to the wide variety of people they would have to serve. With the "advanced" course, on the other hand, I discovered that I had to break through years of studied politeness, politeness that often involved a kind of functional indifference to the truth claims of respective traditions. The members of the class had become deeply engaged in the particulars of ministering in a pluralistic setting, and one of the things that enabled them to do this was simply avoiding the question of truth.

M. B. Handspicker, *a new contributor to* First Things, *is Professor of Pastoral Theology and Evangelism at Andover Newton Theological School.*

The "basic" course required me to teach people how to discern at least the possibility of others being grasped by the same God who had grasped them. The "advanced" course demanded of me that I attempt to return people to the recognition that they had each been grasped by God in a particular way, and that such particularities gave rise to conflicting truth claims and thus to difficulties in ministering with integrity.

However differing the tactics had to be, my basic stance in teaching both courses was the same. What we have to avoid, I would say, are the Scylla of absolutism and the Charybdis of relativism. This is deceptively simple to say and decidedly difficult to carry out in practice. As we worked our way through this problem together, we developed an understanding of the notion of "degrees of truth." We plumbed our autobiographies and in doing so realized that our own understandings of faith had developed over the years. This development, moreover, had not usually been accomplished by replacing the untrue with the true, but rather by replacing the less true with the more true. (Though some of us, to be sure, had undergone conversions that involved much sharper breaks with our prior positions.)

I have brought up this illustration from my own experience in order to underscore the importance of the question of *truth* even in so seemingly "practical" a situation as being an armed services chaplain. Neither the younger nor the older chaplains got into such discussions eagerly. The younger ones, especially those from conservative groups, were so sure of the truth of their own positions they weren't really interested in hearing other positions except to rebut them. The older chaplains had reached a modus vivendi with each other and were loath to disturb it. Yet in private discussions over dinner, or in breaks, one could see that they had strong feelings about each other and that these were not always positive. Many

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had developed a public functional indifference and a private hostility toward the others' theological positions.

Much of the time I was teaching was during the Vietnam War. One reason I chose to teach chaplains during this time was to be in touch with the dilemmas they faced. And so I discovered that chaplains merely face in an acute way what every pastor faces chronically: the possibility that one will be compromising one's position. Which is to say, the chaplain acutely experiences the "heretical imperative" of which Peter Berger speaks. The heretical imperative, the necessity to choose a religious faith (or choose not to have one), is the endemic challenge that issues from life in a pluralistic society and a fortiori in the closed society of the armed services. Indeed, none of us escapes it, whether we know it or not.

How do we cope with it? How do we work and play with people day in and day out who differ from us in religious belief and practice? It seems to me that there are a number of alternatives.

(1) We can seek to avoid the heretical imperative by staying within our reference groups and separating from the wider society. This is the sectarian response incarnated in the Amish but embraced in lesser degrees by many others.

(2) We can engage in open warfare with rival claimants. This is the absolutist response. But it is dangerously vulnerable to idolatry because it refuses to be open to correction or enlargement.

(3) We can embrace relativism wholeheartedly and say that religious truth is a private, or at best a group, affair. Each to his preference so long as we don't harm each other.

(4) We can take a nuanced and dialectical approach that sees the truth as a limit towards which we strive—where judgments of better or worse can (and must) be applied to the variety of theological positions but where the finitude and need for correction and enlargement of all positions is affirmed. This entails a willingness to argue for the truth of one's position, to give reasons why one holds it and holds it to be more adequate than any other position of which one is aware. It also entails openness to correction and a willingness to be as vulnerable to the arguments of another as you ask him or her to be vulnerable to yours.

Obviously I would argue for the last alternative. It incarnates Irenaeus' conviction that "all truth belongs to the Christian." Our revelation, rather than being unique through exclusion, is unique in its inclusiveness. Its critical norm is Jesus Christ; but as Logos of creation ("all things were created through him and for him," Colossians 1:16) He is inclusive of all truth. We therefore need not be defensive in our relationships with others of diverse convictions for we can welcome what in their witness enlarges our comprehension of God's revelation in Christ. At the same time, we need not dilute the specificity of our convictions in order to get along with others.

This approach to the question of revelation and truth is critically important today. This was brought home to me especially in the analysis of the decline of mainline churches.

As sociologists, Messrs. Johnson, Hoge, and Luidens have offered a trenchant analysis of the present condition of the mainline churches, but have said little in the way of prescribing for the situation. Their research shows that "the single best predictor of church participation turn[s] out to be *belief*—orthodox Christian belief, and especially the teaching that a person can be saved only through Jesus Christ." Ninety-five percent of the church dropouts they studied did not believe this proposition (and 68 percent of those who are still active members of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. don't believe it, either). Among what they term "these nonorthodox 'religious' baby-boomers" they discovered a pattern of thought they call "lay liberalism":

> It is "liberal" because its defining characteristic is the rejection of the view that Christianity is the only religion with a valid claim to truth. It is "lay" because it does not reflect any of the theological systems contained in the writings or seminary lectures of today's post-orthodox Christian intellectuals.

The researchers note that while many lay liberals "prefer" Christianity, they are unable to ground their preference in strong truth claims. The lay liberals' pattern of belief and behavior contains some other interesting items as well. They desire a strong moral code, especially for handing down to the next generation; this leads them (along with some out-and-out agnostics) to desire religious education for their children. They firmly reject the doctrine that God consigns anyone to Hell. They rarely try to convert anyone to their point of view.

Johnson, Hoge, and Luidens conclude that lay liberalism is "not an empowering system of belief but rather a set of conjectures concerning religious matters"—one that does not inspire the kind of conviction behind the creation of strong religious communities. One is moved to ask, "What kind of conviction does create strong religious communities?" Their answer is: belief that Christianity is the only religion with a valid claim to truth, that persons can be saved only through Jesus Christ and otherwise go to Hell, and that therefore one should try to convert others to the Christian faith.

In one sense, of course, this analysis is clearly on target: lay liberalism's indifference to truth claims, its fundamental relativism, is disempowering. Convictions not grounded in truth claims are not convictions that can "create strong religious

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

communities." Furthermore, without convictions grounded in truth claims the backbone of the "strong moral code" people desire in their children is undercut. But what kind of truth claims are we talking about? Claims to the truth of what? And is the claim to truth of an exclusive or an inclusive sort (granting, of course, that any claim to truth excludes its opposite)?

Before answering these questions, we need to take a look at some of the reasons for the development of this "lay liberalism." Take the case of those naval chaplains. They had fallen into what I call functional relativism as a way of coping with the acute challenge of working in a pluralistic society. They in effect say to themselves: "Here are people with whom I have to work, day in and day out. They clearly differ from me in their religious convictions, sometimes painfully so. Yet they are also clearly good people. They are intelligent as well. They are neither bad nor mad. We are not going to get along with each other very well if each of us is seeking to convert the other to his position. And in order to achieve our 'mission' we are going to have to get along with each other." (Thus the Navy Chaplains Corps motto: "Cooperation without Compromise.")

The "lay liberalism" that characterizes many within the mainline congregations is a similar modus vivendi, developed by people as they live and work with others in the face of the chronic challenge of the "heretical imperative." Those people with whom they live and work are neither "mad" nor "bad." And they, too, must be gotten along with. The relativism of lay liberalism is a way of dealing with the cognitive dissonance that would set in if one believed that all these folk with whom one is working are going to hell in a handbasket, all the while one was experiencing them as decent, caring, intelligent human beings.

Many people believe that the only alternative attitudes on questions of truth are an absolutism that says if my position is true then yours is false, or a relativism that says it really doesn't matter since all roads lead to God. Given these starkly stated alternatives, it is not surprising that in a pluralistic society such as ours many decent folk opt for relativism.

Clearly, mainline churches ought to be preaching, teaching, and embodying nothing short of Christian orthodoxy. What leaves me dissatisfied with the beliefs said to be necessary for the creation of "strong religious communities" is that they are relatively peripheral doctrines. Furthermore, what we need is not merely the affirmation of specific doctrines (for example, in Christology) but a *way of affirming their truth* that is open to correction and new insight.

The mainline churches are churches that know the Enlightenment has happened and affirm the critical capacities that grew out of it, even as they have been applied to the religious tradition. We use these capacities in the service of the truth; in David Kelsey's phrase, we seek "to understand God truly." The stronger our faith in God and in Jesus Christ the more tentatively we are able to hold on to any particular articulation of that faith. The more we trust God the less we have to defend our time-bound descriptions of God and the more open we can be to correction and enlargement through dialogue with others.

Such tentativeness is *because* of truth claims deeply held and of a commitment to God which demands that we not mistake our doctrines about God for God himself. It is this kind of commitment that we mainline clergy have not been able to communicate to our laity. We have left them, therefore, with the unsatisfactory alternatives of an arrogant absolutism or a flaccid relativism. Thus our evangelization of the lay liberals has become urgently needed, indeed, essential.

To be sure, this sounds somewhat abstract. Let me illustrate what I mean by citing two essays in the Fall 1992 issue of *Prism: A Theological Forum for the United Church of Christ.* In these essays a scholar-pastor and a seminary scholar-administrator grapple with the issues facing mainline churches today as a result of the feminist critique of the tradition. In good "mainline" tradition neither pastor nor administrator shirks the task of facing up to the critique. And in one way or another both agree that aspects of the critique are warranted. But in both cases they do so not despite, but *because* of, their strong truth claims about the Christian faith.

One of these essays, by Richard Floyd, is called ". . . And to the Son: The *Gloria Patri* and Inclusive Language." He is clear about the necessity of language for humanity that includes women, and also of language more inclusively descriptive about God. Yet he points out the dangers associated with throwing out the "naming" language of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He tells us that when a United Church of Christ colleague objected and suggested using depersonalized language, he replied that "an impersonal God would do little justice to the biblical narrative and would lead inevitably to Unitarianism." And his colleague's retort was, "What's wrong with that?"

Floyd is clear about what he is *not* saying: "I am not saying that God is male; Christian discourse about God and liturgical speech to God has been sufficiently apophatic in adjectives such as 'infinite,' 'eternal' . . . to guard against the idolatry of ascribing sex or gender to the Godhead." What he is saying rather is that there is truth about God contained in the traditional Trinitarian formula that we have not yet been able to articulate otherwise. Therefore, "since the church [does] not yet know its own mind on the subject" it is better to "retain the status quo which has at least nearly two millennia of Christian liturgical practice behind it." Which is to say, he is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interested in sustaining the truth articulated in the doctrine of the Trinity. He is not wedded to its present formulation, but will not give it up until another formulation as adequate can be found. His commitment to Christian orthodoxy is clear; and part of this commitment is the willingness to hear and respond to criticism. His colleague, on the other hand, was willing to forego personal categories for the sake of "political correctness." He either has a tenuous grasp on the importance of truth for the theological enterprise, or has defined truth against the grain of the Trinitarian tradition of faith and life.

The other essay is by Mary Luti and makes the point about truth even more poignantly. She accepts feminist analyses of patriarchy's power to define and its systemic male bias—she is a feminist herself. But she raises questions about the epistemological challenges inherent in a perspectival approach to the topic.

> If it is true that all language about God and Christ is susceptible to manipulation and abuse, then more than a confident avowal that subjectivity can be avoided in our choices and usage is needed. Biblical, historical, communal, and rational correctives to such tendencies even among feminists must be forthcoming. If those correctives are not grounded and applied in the constructive task of re-imaging Jesus, it is not far-fetched to imagine that feminists will be as prone as anyone else in Christian history to mere projection.
>
> In spite of how deeply I believe that women's lives belong at the center of theological attention; no matter how fiercely I resist ignoring, rationalizing, or trivializing the ruinous dimensions of the moral evils perpetrated against women in history; no matter how humbly I intend to remain open to the horizons of others who are different from me, I also believe that the *relativizing tendency* of the feminist theory undergirding the constructions of many of the theologians I have been reading will result in a break with historic Christianity.

Here too we see a person not only open to criticism of the tradition, but engaging in it herself. Her disclaimers are not for the sake of ideology but in the name of the truth she perceives has been given in Jesus Christ.

> I do stake my own Christian faith on the conviction that Christ is not an attitude or a way of being in the world. He is not even really, in the end, my role model. He is the Christ I am damn well going to get, the one I do not decide for myself, but the one who has decided for me.

This last sentence puts the matter pungently. In theology we are dealing with "the one who has decided for me." Lacking this conviction we lack the kind of conviction necessary for building a strong religious community. (Though we build the community because we hold the conviction; we do not hold the conviction in order to build the community.) It is this "critical realism" that underlies the essays by both Floyd and Luti. We are dealing not merely with our own conceptions, but rather with that about which our conceptions purport to be. It is our duty to be sure our conceptions are as adequate to that reality as we can make them and to resist any attempt to change them that will reduce their adequacy. It is our duty because we are committed to truth.

We are back again at the beginning. If relativism and absolutism are not acceptable options, what is? An old professor of mine once sought a way through this dilemma by stating that our convictions, at any particular time, are to be held as "relative absolutes." By this he meant that we must stand behind them with the fervor of those who take them to be absolute—for they *are* of the absolute. But we must stand behind them with the critical capacity of those who realize all such statements are relative—for they purport to be *of* the absolute.

In short, both our defense of doctrines because they make truth claims, and our critical attitude towards all doctrines, stem from the same basic commitment to God. Such doctrines are too important not to be taken seriously, *and* they are about the ultimate so they must always be open to revision. If we can communicate this attitude to our people, and they can appropriate it, they can hold religious convictions in such a way that we can together build strong religious communities. In so doing we shall build communities not for their own sake, but for the celebration and propagation of the truth of the Christian faith.

And we can avoid the Scylla of absolutism and the Charybdis of relativism. F1

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Review Essay

Evangelical Theology in Crisis

Edward T. Oakes

NO PLACE FOR TRUTH: OR WHATEVER HAPPENED TO EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY. By DAVID F. WELLS. *Eerdmans. 318 pp. $24.99.*

One of the common oddities of our time is the invocation of statistics to provide comfort and consolation to the religious believer. To be sure, numbers offer an almost irresistible temptation in this regard: over against an overwhelming sense that secularism has succeeded in taking over the definition of the public square, believers are able to counter with statistics showing their own numerical superiority. Take, for example, the statistics released on May 17, 1993 in Chicago by Father Andrew Greeley at the annual meeting of the International Social Survey Program, a worldwide consortium of social scientists. In presenting the results of a survey of at least 1,000 people in each of twelve countries, he said: "It is too early to write an obituary notice for religion. God didn't die; not even under socialism." In fact, for Father Greeley the news gets even better than that. Not only did religion not die, in some places it is positively thriving: "In some countries, most notably Ireland and the United States, religious devotion may be higher than it has ever been in human history."

Comforting, perhaps, but I still wonder; for statistics often end up being equally serviceable to liberals and conservatives alike in the spectrum of church opinion: they are easily bent, in other words, according to people's prior convictions and predilections. It is no secret, for example, that Andrew Greeley is a liberal Catholic (though by no means an automatic one: his critique of catechetical professionals and the peace-and-justice wing of the Catholic Church is well known), and so he often publishes surveys about the sexual behavior and opinions of American Catholics, or discourses learnedly about the prevalence of sexual abuse among priests, and so on, generally (though not always) with an anti-hierarchical bent.

Still, when it comes to the tendentious use of statistics, liberals are hardly alone. Christians on the more conservative end of the spectrum can also be seen dragging around the security blanket of Trends and Surveys. One of the most telling examples of this is Dean Kelley's *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (1972), a tour de force of sociological argumentation, a book that roughly did for evangelicalism by means of sociology what C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* did for it through apologetics. Are you curious to know why Liberal Christianity is a disaster and why only Gospel-based churches are thriving? Well, Kelly has the answer: the conservative churches know what they believe, they make no bones about it, and they are morally demanding and unaccommodating to the *Zeitgeist*.

What could be simpler? What more soothing to the anxious soul assaulted by the relentlessly secular vulgarites of popular culture? Thus, soon after Kelly, other Evangelicals picked up the gauntlet, and a veritable cottage industry was born. Scholars like George Marsden and Nathan O. Hatch provided the details, reassuring the conservative faithful that their rejection of Liberal Protestantism was the right way to go.

The latest product of this industry comes from Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, the very title of whose recent book *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in our Religious Economy* (reviewed in FIRST THINGS, June/July 1993) pretty much tips its hand. Here statistics are marshalled around such essentially economic metaphors as "market share," "subscribers," "outreach programs," etc. The authors' relentlessly free-market analysis might strike some Christians, even conservative ones, as a bit too much, rather as if David Stockman had signed on as unpaid advisor to St. Paul. But the cause, after all, is a good one: to reassure the faithful. "Not secularization but Christianization," avers the FIRST THINGS reviewer in summarizing the book, "is the primary religious fact of American life."

It is hard not to wonder what Pascal, say, or Kierkegaard would think of all this—not to mention Jesus ("When the Son of Man returns, will he find any faith in this sinful and wicked generation?"). One is not many pages into any one of these demographic celebrations before being reminded of Jesus' admonition:

> "The kingdom of God does not admit of observation, nor will there be anyone to say, 'Look, there it is!' or 'No, it's over there!' " . . . Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man and will not see it. They will say to you, 'Look, it is there!' or 'Look, it is here!' Do not go running after them. . . . As it was in Noah's day, so will it also be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating and drinking, marry-

EDWARD T. OAKES, S.J., *a frequent contributor to* FIRST THINGS, *teaches in the Religious Studies Program at New York University.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> ing and getting married, up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. . . . I tell you, on that night, two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left." The disciples spoke up and said, "Where, Lord?" He replied, "Where there is a corpse, there too will the vultures gather." (Luke 17:20-37)

The truth is, things are not well with evangelical Christianity, the Dean Kelley school of sociology notwithstanding. True, in contrast to the mainline liberal denominations, Evangelicals might seem healthy enough, but they have serious illnesses of their own with which to contend.

It is, of course, much too late to hear from Kierkegaard or Pascal, but at least we have among us David F. Wells, professor of theology at Gordon-Cornwall Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. His latest book, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?*, is a searing indictment of evangelical Christianity from within, one just as withering as Pascal's critique of the Jesuitical and Gallican Church of his time or Kierkegaard's jeremiad against his own Danish Lutheran Church.

Let me state at the outset that I am a Roman Catholic. Obviously, anything I have to say about evangelicalism will take on a different coloration from that of the observations of someone within the fold. For one thing, criticisms from within can for obvious reasons always afford to be harsher than those from the outside. In any case, I certainly bear evangelicalism no ill will; on the contrary, I respect its professed desire to let Christ rule unreservedly in His Church, and I affirm with it the perennial authority of the Bible for Church life and doctrine. Moreover, the afflictions of evangelicalism also deeply affect Roman Catholicism in America.

Now clearly, evangelical Christianity is not dead. By the same token, the facile optimism of the sociological apologists is, to put it mildly, highly questionable. For what they gloss over, at least with respect to the American scene, is the question of what people *mean* when they report their opinions to the pollsters. The great merit of David F. Wells' book is that he refuses to flinch from this crucial question. Indeed, he goes further, tracing certain flaws unique to the American character to the influence of Protestant evangelicalism throughout American history:

> The attraction of evangelical faith, then, has been very intimately tied up with this reshaping of the American character. Evangelicals have always insisted that Christ is a person who can and should be known personally; he is not simply an item on a creed to which assent should be given. But from this point they have drawn conclusions that become increasingly injurious. They have proceeded to seek assurance of faith not in terms of the objective truthfulness of the biblical teaching but in terms of the efficacy of its subjective experience. Testimonies have become indispensable items in the evangelistic fare. [But] testifying to having experienced Christ personally is peculiarly seductive in the modern context, because it opens up to view an *inner experience* that responds to the hunger of the "other-directed" individual but often sacrifices its objective truth value in doing so. The question it poses to the outside is not whether Christ is objectively real but simply whether the experience is appealing, whether it seems to have worked, whether having it will bring one inside the group and give one connections to others.

Whatever else Protestantism may be said to have been protesting against, it surely focused prominently on the elitism of the medieval ecclesiastical polity, whereby Christian life was rigidly divided into a life of the commandments (for the laity) and an optional but more demanding (and therefore more meritorious) life of the evangelical "councils," only the latter of which gave one access to the authority structures of the Church. Over against this medieval hegemony, the Reformers posited a universally available Bible, access to whose message was given by faith—a faith, moreover, that was theoretically available to all and that put everyone on the same level before God. But access is not the same thing as admission, and the question was left unresolved as to whether this reported faith was the right faith *in*. This is the old distinction between *fides qua* (the act of faith) and *fides quae* (the content of what one believes), and it has always been the snag that has threatened to unravel the fabric of Protestant theology. The Bible, of course, is conceded to be the norm that determines right content, but that book is so protean and various that it soon became a norm determined more by *fides qua* than *fides quae*, with Calvin, for example, stressing the continued validity of Old Testament law while Mennonites insisted on the abolition of the old law by the Sermon on the Mount.

American political culture, as we know, is a unique blend of Enlightenment political theory and populist Protestantism. But such an intersection of political and religious populism is precisely the danger for evangelicalism, as Wells points out:

> Common access to truth is understood to mean common *possession* of truth. If everyone's intuitions about God and life stand on the same plane, it is assumed that they are all equally valid, equally true, and equally useful. At the very least, it has become awkward to suggest that the intuitions someone has found to be valid, true, and useful might be nothing of the kind. After all, one does not question the propriety of extending the vote to all, and it seems quite as arrogant and offensive to question extending a presumption of common insight to all. Furthermore, just as politicians hold office only by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> consent of the sovereign electorate, so Church leaders should fulfill their responsibilities within the limits of popularly held ideas. . . . The best pollster now makes the best leader, for all ideas must find their sanction, even their legitimacy, in the audience, and who knows the audience better than a pollster?

Here he pinpoints the fatal flaw in all statistical studies of religious matters that go beyond the mere reporting of their data to advocating policy positions—whether conventionally "liberal" or "conservative"—based on that data.

> The fundamental requirement of the Christian leader is not a knowledge of where the stream of popular opinion is flowing but a knowledge of where the stream of God's truth lies. . . . Only a genuine leader has such vision. Those who do not, those who are the servants merely of popular opinion, seldom amount to more than the blind leaders of the blind that Jesus castigated. How so? It is because, in the modern context at least, popular opinion frequently carries within itself the corruptions of popular culture.

Here lies the real issue: the degradation of popular culture under the onslaught of a new civilization of mass media. Populist churches in the nineteenth century were one thing, but in the twentieth they are quite another. This is because, as Wells points out, a new culture has inexorably been replacing the old. Unlike the Enlightenment, this new culture is the product not of the intentions of thinkers and philosophers—what Wells calls "modernism"—but of the transformations wreaked by technical innovation—what he calls "modernization":

> This was a time in which ideas counted. In Our Time they do not. What shapes the modern world [are] not powerful minds but powerful forces, not philosophy but urbanization, capitalism, and technology. As the older quest for truth has collapsed, intellectual life has increasingly become little more than a gloss on the processes of modernization. Intellectuals merely serve as mirrors, reflecting what is taking place in society.

The historical contrast is particularly vivid if one takes as an example the evangelical doctrine of "justification by faith alone." This doctrine requires that the focus of the preaching of the Word be to each individual heart, which alone must make the decision for faith. But without a coherent view of what that faith must be a faith *in*, preaching easily slips into the mode of either moralizing or entertaining. In any case, when in the 1880s Knut Hamsun, the Norwegian Nobel prize-winner, visited America, he noted that the sermons he heard typically did "not contain theology but morality. . . . They do not develop the mind, though they are entertaining."

But in the new technologically driven civilization, the notion of "entertainment" has altered radically. Wells discusses a report in the *Wall Street Journal* of December 11, 1990, titled "Preaching a Gospel of Acquisition: A Showy Sect Prospers." The piece is an account of the Phoenix First Assembly Church, situated on seventy-two acres of choice country-club-type property. The church currently boasts an *attendance* of around 10,000 people each Sunday, up from only 200 in 1979.

> [The] reporter who visited it described the minister's plans to build a replica of Jerusalem nearby, "with camels and everything," as well as an amphitheater with "prayer gardens and caves." It is a church of drama. The preacher punctuates his sermons with eye-catching and heart-stopping antics such as his personal flight to heaven on invisible wires . . . and his incorporation of a "rented elephant, kangaroo, and zebra" in a Christmas service. Other churches have gone to similar lengths. . . .

As Kant explained to us, there is no behavior without a cause, and this shameless show-biz vulgarity could never have found a roost in American Protestantism without prior cause. Perhaps the most successfully realized aspect of Wells' book is his diagnosis of the causes behind such "marketing strategies" for the Gospel. (Indeed, his diagnosis is much more successful than his prognosis, about which, more later.)

Indeed, he proves to be a brilliant diagnostician. His prose is direct and honest, and it gains its moral force from the clarity of his vision. What he sees is a kind of Faustian bargain between the prosperity that technology brings and the atomization of the self that comes in its wake: "The values that often accompany Western plenty . . . have become the acid that is eating at the Western soul. The hand that gives so generously in the material realm also takes away devastatingly in the spiritual." This general reality has a direct impact on the Christian congregation, and especially on the Christian minister.

> Professional demeanor weighs more heavily than does theological ability. . . . The most desired clerical quality is an "open, affirming" style and that which is the most abhorred is a style marked by "legalism" in matters of truth and ethics, a style that excludes the participation of others, or is domineering. The open and affirming minister relates warmly to others, affirming them even in stressful situations. . . .

Now although Wells clearly looks askance at this development, probably not many congregations would find this profile in the least embarrassing. The point is that a sociologist can easily describe the *role* of the minister, but what about his *vocation*? "Basically," Wells tells

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

us, "[religious] consumers are looking for the sort of thing the self movement is offering; they just want it in evangelical dress." The result for the clergyman is that he is "cast loose upon high seas"—"a genuinely God-centered ministry is almost certain to collide head-on with the self-absorption and anthropocentric focus" that has become commonplace in so many evangelical churches.

The pathologies currently afflicting Christian clergyman are nowadays all too familiar, from degrading, though very real, tales of sexual abuse all the way to frivolous lawsuits for "malpractice" (including *doctrinal* malpractice!) by disgruntled lay people. It is almost as if modernization had become a whirlpool pulling into its vortex anyone who visibly stands up for the Gospel.

But, as Wells so clearly sees, the problems afflicting the clergy are only the same problems that beset the Church at large; the professional anxieties that undermine effective ministry are but the symptoms and indications of the dilemma of being a Christian at all in the modern world:

> Precisely because modernization has created an external world in which unbelief seems normal, it has at the same time created a world in which Christian faith is alien. It is the inability to resist this oddness that is now working its havoc on the Christian mind. The Christian mind in the midst of modernity is like the proverbial frog in the pot beneath which a fire has been kindled. Because the water temperature rises slowly, the frog remains unaware of the danger until it is too late. In the same way, the Church often seems to be blithely unaware of the peril that now surrounds it.

One indication of this, alongside the professional woes of the Christian clergy, is the marginalization of theology in the life of the Church. Indeed, the author begins the book by reciting his experiences of lecturing about theology *in a seminary* and getting only looks of utter bafflement by way of response from his students. It was in fact out of that experience that he came to write this book: "I have watched with growing disenchantment as the evangelical Church has cheerfully plunged into astounding theological illiteracy."

Wells' portrait of the current theological scene is certainly grim, but one feature that makes it refreshing is his refusal to indulge in the usual conservative lament of blaming it all on the academy. The real problem with theology is the lack of appetite for it not just in the academy but in the churches themselves.

> Many of the scholarly disciplines, such as Old and New Testament study, that once fed into theology now assail it in the interests of asserting their own independence; many of those whose task it is to broker the truth of God to the people of God in the churches have now so redefined the pastoral task that theology has become an embarrassing encumbrance or a matter of which they have little knowledge, and many in the church have now turned in upon themselves and substituted for the knowledge of God a search for the knowledge of self.

Not that the responsibility of the academy for this dismal state of affairs is to be scanted or excused. But in the marginalizing of theology, Wells shrewdly spots an implicit alliance between the churches and the academy. The universities are, after all, workshops of ideas, and in that sense their linkage with the Enlightenment is natural if not inevitable.

> What makes the disappearance of confession in academic circles almost inevitable, barring an occasional episode of rebellion such as that mounted by Karl Barth and his allies, is that there is now an insurmountable coalition between the Enlightenment idea that it is the subject who defines reality and the universities that are now structured not only to make this idea normative but also to make its orthodox alternative unacceptable.

The Liberal churches, for their part, were directly influenced by modernism, and were thus explicit in their insistence on separating scientific study of the Bible from systematic theology. But for the evangelical churches, having fallen victim to modernization, the outcome is the same:

> The disappearance of theology, in both Church and academy, is itself one of the fruits of modernization and . . . it has little to do with the way that theology is being constructed per se. Furthermore, the unraveling of the ties between contemporary evangelicalism and historic orthodoxy is not the result of a deliberate strategy but is rather one of the effects of modernity that evangelicals have unconsciously accepted.

The unhappy result of this has been a debilitating reinforcement between church and academy: whatever attenuated appetite for theology there may yet be left in the churches is fed by a flood of books coming out of the universities that are by and large based on explicit Enlightenment assumptions that then go on to reinforce the modernizing tendencies at work in *all* the churches. Wells is particularly bleak in his description of how deeply embedded this dynamic is. According to his analysis, it would seem that none of the theology being done in the academy can in any way be regarded as useful to the churches. Perhaps his analysis is overdrawn, but it is best to hear him out:

> [There is] a niche in the American academy for religion provided that it is empirically examined. It establishes the legitimacy of looking at religion through the eyes of psychology, anthropology, or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> sociology. But this narrows the means of access to religion to the structures of the self, the tribe, or society, and this necessarily establishes twin biases—a bias in favor of the sort of classical Liberalism that Schleiermacher argued for (which seeks disclosure of God *within* human experience) and a bias against classical orthodoxy (which builds on revelation, the ultimate source of which is *outside* human experience). The university opens its arms to those theologians who can successfully disguise themselves as psychologists, anthropologists, or sociologists looking for divine reality within the structures of the self or society, but it is a good deal less hospitable to those who find it hard, if not impossible, to see these mediating structures as themselves the vehicles of revelation and who look instead to Scripture as a confessional source that does not merely mirror human consciousness but is the means of transcendent disclosure. . . . In the absence of both confession and an overt commitment to a devout practice, an already ailing theology is doomed to die.

Of course, he observes later,

> appearances suggest quite the contrary: Evangelicals seem to be at the zenith of their influence. Influence, however, is . . . necessarily bound up with an appropriate relationship with truth and character, both of which are eroded in every accommodation that is made to modernity. It is the inextinguishable knowledge of being owned by the transcendent God that forms character, and His ownership challenges that of every other contender, including that of the modern world.

Despite the author's resolutely anti-sociological approach, however, he is willing to hear out the optimists who boast of the vast growth of evangelically minded people on their own terms, but he then goes on to ask them some rather embarrassing questions *on those very terms:*

> The vast growth in evangelically minded people in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s should by now have revolutionized American culture. With a third of American adults now claiming to have experienced spiritual rebirth, a powerful countercurrent of morality growing out of a powerful and alternative worldview should have been unleashed in factories, offices, and board rooms, in the media, universities, and professions, from one end of the country to the other. . . . But as it turns out, all of this swelling of the evangelical ranks has passed unnoticed in the culture. It has simply been absorbed and tamed. Aside from Jerry Falwell's aborted attempt from the political right in the 1980s to roll back the earlier victories scored by the left, especially during the 1960s, the presence of evangelicals in American culture has barely caused a ripple.

So his thesis, too, is testable, after a fashion; but it is a thesis animated first and above all by a moral vision, the same vision, I think, that moved the prophet Hosea to say: "There is no faithfulness in the land, no love, no acknowledgement of God. There is only cursing, lying, and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed." (Hosea 4:1-2)

For Wells there could hardly be imagined a world more hungry for the Gospel than ours: "Our drug-infested, crime-ridden inner cities have become miniature workshops in which we can see how the inherent instability of our social order can easily lead to complete disorder." And yet this is exactly what the evangelical churches are *not* providing:

> Here is a corner of the religious world that has learned from the social scientists how to grow itself, that is sprouting huge mega-churches that look like shopping malls for the religious, that can count in its own society the moneyed and powerful, and yet it causes not so much as a ripple. . . . Thus it is that both American culture and American evangelicalism have come to share the same fate, both basking in the same stunning, outward success while stricken by a painful vacuity, an emptiness in their respective centers. . . . As a result, in the one there are no moral absolutes, and in the other there is no theology.

Clearly, the prognosis for a cure for this disease so grimly diagnosed will depend on how Christian leaders find a theology that is both faithful to the Christian message *and* provides an adequate response to these dilemmas. Here, I think, Wells falls short. For one thing, it is only toward the end of the book, in the penultimate chapter, "The Habits of God," that the author even so much as hints at what his positive response would be.

The first great problem is his over-reliance on the analogy between the pagan world that confronted the New Testament writers and the modern world facing the churches today. To begin with, he is far too sweeping in his (entirely pejorative) characterization of paganism: "The pagan failed to make a distinction between the natural and supernatural," or, "It is obvious that the pagan mind had no moral categories superseding the relativities of daily life. Pagans made no appeal to moral absolutes." This would certainly have come as news to Socrates, who was executed for daring to subsume the gods under moral norms. And Aristotle a *relativist?* For that matter, the Bible doesn't invoke the distinction between "natural" and "supernatural" either—at least not in precisely those terms. It might be implicit, but if so, we must then concede the same possibility to paganism as well: paganism did after all know of revelations.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The second flaw is his concomitantly too-sweeping characterization of a vaguely described "world of the Bible." Just as in the pagan world we are to find only darkness, so are we to find in the Bible real judgments of right and wrong. Here we can finally walk with a "lamp unto [our] feet" to guide us unerringly into the paths of truth and right. Now though one would rightly expect Wells to be much more familiar with the Bible than he seems to be with classical texts and culture, he has nonetheless, in this much-too-brief chapter, finessed a number of issues—mostly by conveniently ignoring hard texts.

Take, for example, an extreme argument offered, from the other side of the church spectrum, in a small book, *The Bible Without Illusions*, written by the Church of Ireland bishop and renowned patristic scholar R. P. C. Hanson and his brother (also an Anglican clergyman) A. T. Hanson. Now I happen to believe that their point is overdrawn, but it is still one that Wells ignores too quickly:

> One often hears the demand made by ministers and laity alike, that those who are training for the ordained ministry should not be burdened with too much academic study of the Bible, but that the curriculum should include "the ability to apply the Scriptures to the needs of the world," to quote a recent speaker. This sounds good. But on examination it turns out to be a remarkably simplistic suggestion. How does anyone apply the Scriptures to the needs of the world? Are we to teach our prospective clergy that at all cost they are not to suffer witches to live, that in view of the present distress it is better that nobody should marry, that there is no future life, that women must be kept out of public life and confined to church, crêche and kitchen, that slaves should obey their masters, that the guilt of the death of Christ is attached to every succeeding generation of Jews since the crucifixion? We shall find all these views endorsed at various parts of the Scriptures.

The problem with the Hansons is that they push a valid point too far. Indeed, as with so many liberal theologians, they seem incapable of making distinctions—almost in the same way fundamentalists do, but in the opposite direction. Thus they go on in a manner unfortunately too common among Anglican theologians (and very much including some of their bishops) of pitching all doctrinal ballast overboard:

> Are we to teach [seminarians] that God is pure, unqualified love, and also that he is angry with sinners, that Jesus propitiated God's wrath so that he was able to forgive us, and also that God's love takes the initiative and reaches us even while we are sinners, that Jesus apparently disavowed divinity in St. Mark's Gospel and eagerly claimed it in St. John's, that Matthew and Luke say that Jesus rejected the temptation to perform spectacular miracles in order to win disciples during his temptation in the wilderness, and that according to St. John's Gospel a few weeks later he turned a large quantity of water into wine in order to oblige some friends at a wedding? All of these beliefs, at least implicitly, can be found in the New Testament.

Which is to say, that because we cannot accept the bit about witches, we cannot at the same time keep in our heads the idea of God's love and wrath or that Jesus performed miracles on one occasion and not another. No doubt it is just such casual methods of throwing the entire text of the Bible into one vast basket and then calling it all into question that make evangelicals so suspicious of liberal theology—and of the scientific study of the Bible on which it justifies so many of its conclusions. Still, the Hansons are not without a point; at least they don't flinch from the issue at hand:

> How *do* we apply the Sermon on the Mount to the problem of nuclear weapons, the threat to the environment, drug-taking and the practice of abortion, and the prevalence of terrorism? To take one apparently simple subject only, that of divorce: In St. Mark's Gospel Jesus absolutely rules out any form of divorce; in St. Matthew's Gospel he allows an exception—"except for the case of adultery." Either therefore Jesus did not pronounce that marriage was indissoluble, because he permitted it to be ended in the case of adultery (whatever he meant by "adultery") or the church at a very early period indeed permitted itself to modify his rigorous pronouncement by making an exception in the case of adultery. Which is correct? What conclusions are we to draw? What is the simple straightforward teaching upon this subject?

Evangelicals by and large don't like to step into these waters because of the awkward issue of the authority and normativity of the Bible, its limpidity and immediacy for today. But face these issues they must, because they won't go away. Let us grant for a moment Wells' assumption, untenable though it be, that there is a direct parallel between the pagan and the modern worlds. Even so, this would in no way mean that we have to adopt Tertullian's sneer, "What has Athens got to do with Jerusalem?" Tertullian is by far in a minority among the Church Fathers on this point. All the other Fathers, with their doctrine of *logos spermatikos* and the *praeparatio evangelica* (with Socrates and Plato as the Hellenic "prophets") took a much more nuanced view. One of the things, in fact, that makes Karl Barth so refreshing as an evangelical theologian is his refusal to indulge in that myopic habit common to many conservative Protestants of tacitly assuming orthodox theology died with Paul and only rose again with Luther's *Lectures on Galatians*. Wells is of course right that there can be no healthy church life without a healthy interest in theol-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ogy; but at the same time there can be no healthy theology without a solid grounding in the Fathers.

At one point, Wells makes a remark almost in passing to the effect that "the earlier Liberalism was a far more serious enterprise theologically than evangelicalism typically is today." The remark is telling, although, of course, it no longer holds true, since liberal theology has so completely unmoored itself from the Bible and fallen prey to an assortment of theological fads. But such figures as Ernst Troeltsch, Adolf von Harnack, and Rudolf Bultmann do live on in the memory, and it announces nothing startling or new to say that evangelicalism has no one remotely like these towering figures to do the work that Wells is asking for. Nor will such greatness be likely if the prescribed result of one's scholarship is one of coming to the conclusion that the biblical world represents all of light and the classical world of paganism pure darkness. We need to be reminded once more by Karl Barth:

> Much of the theology of the New Covenant is painted not in Israelite but in what are doubtless Greek shades of color, redeemed in the light of true love but fundamentally undisturbed. . . . The *agape* of the Christian would not be what it claims to be if it remains hidden to the transparency of Greek *eros*; when a person schooled in Hellenic culture encounters the Christian, he should feel a sense of solidarity to the very roots of his erotic being.

What Wells preaches, however, is not solidarity but dichotomy, and not just between the pagan world and a (mostly undefined) "world of the Bible," but also between that biblical world and the world of modernity. Here, too, the contrasts are drawn too sharply. For example, in various passages Wells makes such avowals as: "I disbelieve in the modern world because I believe in God, in His truth, and in His Christ." Or more startlingly: "I do not believe in modernity *at all*" (emphasis added). This might be a proper declaration for a Shaker or Amish Protestant, but outside of such sectarian circles, how can sweeping statements like this be maintained? On one occasion, Wells does admit that modernization has brought benefits and blessings as well as addictions and corruptions and that he is willing to enjoy, in moderation, such blessings. But it was the opinion of no less a figure than Rudolf Bultmann, in perhaps his most famous statement, that one becomes a demythologizer by the very act of turning on the radio. Bultmann's is no doubt another example of a too-sweeping statement; nevertheless he has a point. In short, Wells' next book (which he promises will describe his positive program more fully) will need to be more nuanced in its constructive proposals than what we have here.

On the other hand, it is worth repeating that sketchy as these proposals are, their author is on the right road. Perhaps most reassuring of all is his insistence on the Resurrection, most of all on the way its particularity calls into judgment all generalities, especially the all-time vague generality called "experience":

> The early Christians do not preach their *experience* of Christ; that would have been to promote a form of religion like any other form of religion. Rather, they preached the Christ of that experience. They preached not what was internally interesting but what was externally true. God had raised him from the dead, and this was a matter of history, not simply of internal perception. The bells that rang in celebration of God's conquest over sin, death, and the devil also summoned every competing religious worldview into judgment.

Here Wells most closely approaches the voice of the Reformers at their most authentic. For whatever else the Reformers knew, they knew above all that only God is God. Nothing mere mortals can do will ever capture God; all they can do is *accept* God—should He deign to reveal himself. It is his stress on God's objective holiness that makes Wells' book so bracing. In fact, in his concentration on God's inherent holiness, he even avoids getting overly involved in the distinction, dear to old Protestant-Catholic debates, between justification and sanctification, for they are both concepts that fundamentally refer to the ways of appropriating, on the human side, God's own holiness. And *that* is what we—all of us, Catholics, Evangelicals, and everyone else in Christ's church—should be concentrating on. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books In Review

Democracy's Discontents

Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America. By Robert Hughes. *Oxford University Press. 210 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by **John P. Sisk**

This book immerses us in the discontents that derive from our sexual, ethnic, racial, economic, political, moral, and religious differences. Yet again we are taken over the familiar and complaint-rich subjects: political correctness, multiculturalism, affirmative action, the expectations and failures of equal opportunity mandates, the conflict of liberals and conservatives over the literary canon, the effect in the academy and the larger community of Afrocentrism, deconstruction, radical feminism, and the conflict of art and morality. So frayed are we as a nation that we have become a powerful factor in what might be called the "New World Disorder."

Given our democracy's capacity to breed complaining victims, the wonder is that Robert Hughes' book is so short. "Complaint gives you power," Hughes observes nicely, "even when it's only the power of emotional bribery, of creating previously unnoticed levels of social guilt." There are times now when one might think that a close observer of the American scene could go on forever from this point. No doubt the fact that the book was developed from three lectures, given under the auspices of the Oxford University Press and the New York Public Library, was a restricting factor.

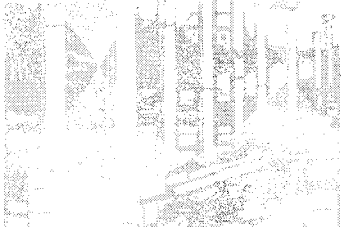
The terms Hughes works with are the conventional ones: liberal, left-liberal, neoliberal, conservative, neoconservative, fundamentalist, etc. If it is sometimes hard to locate him in the sociopolitical spectrum as he takes on the always controversial ramifications of his subject, this may be not only because he has seen a great deal of the world but because before his twenty-two years in America he was a Jesuit-educated Irish Australian who became an ex-Catholic. Perhaps this background helps to explain his thematic preoccupation with the extremist tendency in American discourse, which has often enough been seen as a kind of provincialism by those born and bred in lower-keyed and less diversified cultures. He is struck with how habitually in complex situations we insist on an either/or when communal well-being demands a both/and. Andrea Dworkin, for instance, is typically simplistic when she reduces all heterosexual intercourse to rape—a simplification that goes along with "the lumpen-feminist assault on all words that have 'man' as a prefix or suffix," and with our capacity to be as obsessed now with the manufacture of victims as in the nineteenth century we were with the production of heroes.

In fact, *Culture of Complaint* is itself a complaint about American immoderation that is not above covering a lot of territory quickly with its own immoderate generalizations. We read, for instance, that "Reaganism did more to uncouple business from its traditional moorings than any political ideology in the country's history." There are economists, not all of them Republican, who might suggest that it isn't that simple—that, in fact, such an assessment edits and diminishes the past just as effectively as the American habit of euphemism and circumlocution that Hughes deplores.

Writing about the politicization of the American campus, Hughes says that "universities must expose their students to debate, and genuine debate *should* include the left, the right, and the center, particularly in times as conservative as these." The absence of such genuine debate,

John P. Sisk, *a frequent contributor to* First Things, *is Professor Emeritus of English at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington.*

WHAT DOES ATHENS HAVE TO DO WITH JERUSALEM?



Some say nothing at all. Others say they are natural enemies. At Franciscan University of Steubenville, Athens and Jerusalem enrich each other.

Our Master of Arts in philosophy is firmly rooted in the tradition of Christian philosophy, but at the same time takes seriously the contributions and the challenges of modern philosophy. We place a special emphasis on the philosophy of the human person, including questions of freedom, right and wrong, community, and one's relationship to God.

Requiring only one full year of study, this program is ideal for those who would like to add a new dimension to graduate studies in literature, political science, history, or theology. It will also interest those who simply desire to reflect more closely on the fundamental questions of human existence.

Learn to integrate faith and understanding. Pursue an MA in philosophy at Franciscan University.

Franciscan University of Steubenville

100 Franciscan Way,
Steubenville, Ohio 43952-6701

1-800-783-6220

FT 9310

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

both in the academy and outside it, results in the extremist reductionism that marks our thinking about political correctness, multiculturalism, and the academic canon. What he has to say as he goes over this well-trodden ground is not especially new, but he writes knowledgeably and in a style that combines wit with a controlled indignation at the palpable follies of the contemporary scene. On the subject of those academic intellectuals who refuse to give up on Marx and Lenin he says: "Marxism has passed through the fires of its own dissolution and is reborn as a 'hero with a thousand faces'—multiculturalism." On the subject of the 8,000 Dutch artists whose useless work a pampering government collects he has this: "So there it all sits, democratic, non-hierarchical, non-elitist, non-sexist, unsalable and, to the great regret of the Dutch government, only partially biodegradable." With sentences like these—and there are quite a few of them—it's not hard to understand why the book, now in its third printing, has made the best-seller list. Among other things, it is an entertainment.

This is to question neither the author's seriousness nor the possibility of combining effective criticism with entertainment, but it is to say that Americans can take an awful lot of critical abuse, and even enjoy it, if the critic will also entertain them. This is why among Hughes' respected and successful predecessors have been scolds like Mark Twain, Finley Peter Dunne, Ring Lardner, and H.L. Mencken, to say nothing of beatnik poet-critics like Allen Ginsberg, nightclub performers like Lenny Bruce, and now radio critics like Rush Limbaugh. The perspective of humor (and one must include irony) has a capacity to dispose of an issue by placing reader or audience in a position that promises to be invulnerable to further questioning: his or its being amused is itself sufficient proof of good faith. Consider Twain's amusing depiction of a redneck racial extremist in chapter 6 of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Here Huck's "pap" launches into his diatribe against the "wonderful govment" that wants to give the Negro the vote. He sounds as absurd, perhaps to many who in their hearts will never stop agreeing with him, as Hughes makes Senator Jesse Helms sound when, with "the dewlaps of his wrath" shaking, he fulminates against the obscenity and filth of the Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective. As Hughes sees him, Helms is as much a threat to the American polity as are those complaining Afrocentric extremists who counter Eurocentric bias with anthropological absurdities.

HUGHES, art critic for *Time*, is good on the consequences for art when our cultural supervisors try to sell it to the public on the basis of its therapeutic value. One may wonder too about the culturally therapeutic value of entertainment. Is our dependence on amusement as a means of realizing the threats to the American promise an indication of our cultural triviality, as if all we need to counter Huck's pap are more TV programs like "All in the Family"? God knows, the vein of triviality in the polity is a thoroughly familiar subject of complaint. Hughes sees it vigorously and passionately on display wherever the academy is trying to be multiculturally and politically correct. In the abortion debate he finds the pro-life position just as reductively trivial as he finds the Afrocentrists' claim to their new kind of cultural hegemony, or the religious right's resistance to gay liberation. Indeed, Hughes' own witty complaints about the complaining culture can distract the reader's attention from the system's capacity to encourage commonsense rejections of its own excesses by putting them on display as if in a freak show. So in Texas recently we had the "potty parity" issue as the National Coalition of Free Men complained that men were being denied the lavatory conveniences that women have. So in a recent *Rolling Stone* we learned that the social critic, Ice-T, whose rap song "Cop Killer" had been censored out of his album *Body Count* because of public pressure, had, like Huck's pap, lost all respect for the First Amendment and the Constitution as well.

In any event, it is not hard to see why a concentration on the absurdities, contradictions, and immoderations of American culture can be so frustrating for the critic. The culture in its normal operations has a perverse and self-protective capacity to beat him to the punch, so that his only escape from irrelevance often seems to be the way of the entertainer—who is doomed to leave the stage after a successful performance with the sense that nothing has changed. In *Culture of Complaint* one can find the same undercurrent of discouragement, especially in the first lecture, that one has already found in Mencken and Twain. It is the familiar dilemma of the satirist: the more successful he is as an artist the more he is likely to be valued as a showman than as an advocate for needed change. Ultimately he may have to rest on the same act of faith that Hughes' readers do: that without him things might get worse. This, as always, could be no mean accomplishment, especially now when we have to live with the doleful predictors like Paul Kennedy, whose *Toward the Twenty-first Century* suggests that before long we may have more to complain about than ever.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE cybernetic and too often freakish process of American democracy is only helpful, not infallible. Ultimately we have to discriminate among the clamorous complainants. As the National Right to Life Committee knows too well, the complaint of the unborn against denied life is now as hard for some (including Hughes) to hear as a century ago the complaint of the black man was. Now as always the polity's rough-and-ready practice is to counter faction with faction, with the consequences that James Madison feared. In *The Federalist* No. 10, expressing his fear of "the cabals of the few," he writes as if he is all too aware that he is addressing a culture of complaint that will

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

always have a hard time discriminating between what Hughes calls "informed multiculturalism" and a "wildly polemical separatism." Being a practical man, Madison offers two methods for removing the causes of the disease of faction: "the one by destroying the liberty that is essential to its existence; the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinion, the same passions, and the same interests."

Within recent memory, attempts have been made to use Madison's first method as a way of guaranteeing that the second will work, and the results have been anything but harmonious communities: once the pressure is off, the liberated complainants often prove harder to live with than ever. Since democracy is a complaint-generating facilitator for all those committed to the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness, it may be that it is threatened less by the noisy number and variety of complainants than by a loss of nerve that would prompt it to put peace and quiet first. In this book, to cite a typical instance, there is little peace and quiet as Hughes, the art and social critic, encounters Helms, the defender of public morality, on the subject of Mapplethorpe's X portfolio. But it is worth noting that the antagonists agree that the photographs are disgusting; Hughes, in fact, refused to write a catalogue introduction for the retrospective. But he also levels against Helms a statement on the necessary distinction between the realm of art and the realm of morals made to the House subcommittee by the Jesuit Timothy Leary, the late president of the New York Public Library. So again there was the clash of extremes that so preoccupies Hughes.

It was, however, a clarifying clash. Here one might recall a remark made by Madison's contemporary, the English poet William Blake, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "Without Contraries is no progression." There is little reason to believe that this particular clarification will survive untended. As with all the clarifications we have won through to, it will have to be argued for over and over again in ever new contexts of complaint. The determination to keep on making the effort to do so a part of our national life, even when we only manage to keep things from getting worse, may be one of the surest signs that our democracy is progressing.

The Right Right

THE NEOCONSERVATIVE MIND: POLITICS, CULTURE, AND THE WAR OF IDEOLOGY. By GARY DORRIEN. *Temple University Press. 500 pp. $34.95.*

Reviewed by **Mark Gerson**

IN A SENSE, modern American political thought is a battle for the legacy of Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and John F. Kennedy. With the

THE PRICE OF PROPHECY

Orthodox Churches on Peace, Freedom, and Security

Alexander F. C. Webster

Foreword by George Huntston Williams

As Eastern Europe struggles to emerge from its Communist past, the public moral witness of its Orthodox Churches has assumed a special importance to Americans seeking a truly just world order. Yet how many Americans know what these vast and ancient Christian Churches stand for, especially on crucial issues of freedom and human rights, war and peace, and national security? In this unprecedented analysis, Fr. Alexander F. C. Webster looks at the Russian Orthodox Church, the Romanian Orthodox Church, and the much smaller but vocal Orthodox groups in the United States. He expertly mines the primary sources to reveal a story of both political collaboration and moral courage, of ideological compromise and spiritual conviction, of faithless betrayal of the Church and selfless fidelity to its moral tradition.

"It is time for a new dialogue [between the Orthodox Church and Protestantism], and it would be hard to imagine a better starting point than this book. . . . Webster has a vigorous and jargon-free style. His book is a pleasure to read."—MICHAEL BOURDEAUX, director, Keston Research, Oxford, England

365 pages ■ $24.50 cloth ■ ISBN 0-89633-169-5

Available at bookstores or through University Press of America, 1-800-462-6420

ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY CENTER

1015 Fifteenth Street NW ■ Washington, DC 20005

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exception of the most committed paleoconservatives and the most ideological libertarians, a consensus has developed in American thought that accepts civil rights, the New Deal, and the goal of equality of opportunity. These cornerstones of the liberalism of old—"when Democrats were Democrats"—are supported by most conservatives and even exalted by some: Ronald Reagan, for instance, who consistently quoted Presidents Roosevelt and Kennedy and who never sought to repeal Social Security or to reinstitute a traditional understanding of states rights. By and large, American conservatives seek to conserve both the policies and the society wrought by men who were considered liberals just three decades ago.

Interestingly, when the word "change" is applied to modern American intellectual life, it is generally associated with the neoconservatives. The traditional conservatives, as represented by *National Review*, now support civil rights —after once having considered them a violation of Burkean notions of traditional order—and now advocate basic government social welfare programs—having once vilified them as a negation of freedom and a harbinger of collectivism. Liberals, on the other hand, who once championed civil rights, pluralism, and equality of opportunity, now all too often support quotas, multicultural Balkanization, and equality of outcome rather than opportunity. In contrast to both liberals and old conservatives, neoconservatives have consistently supported a limited welfare state buttressed by an understanding of human nature based on religious values, a strong military, and a desire to allow communities to decide for themselves how best to balance their needs with the demands of individual freedom. Thus, while contemporary liberals abandoned the neoconservatives, *National Review* conservatives joined them. It is the neoconservatives who have, for the most part, remained in place.

Yet, because most neoconservatives were once called "liberal" and are now called "conservative," the literature of modern political thought is filled with discussions of how the neoconservatives have changed. Theories abound: Was it the counterculture? Israel? The excesses of the *New York Review of Books*? Was it a desire to work in spacious offices at the American Enterprise Institute, sit on corporate boards, and receive lucrative grants from conservative foundations?

IN *The Neoconservative Mind*, Gary Dorrien accepts all of these explanations and more as reasons why a core group of intellectuals have abandoned the true faith of liberalism and carved out for themselves a new conservatism which, in his view, is really no better than the old. Dorrien selects four neoconservatives—Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Michael Novak, and Peter Berger—whose careers he finds emblematic of the neoconservative intellectual movement.

The Neoconservative Mind is more a rebuttal of neoconservative political positions than a philosophical exploration. Dorrien, a professor, Episcopal priest, and theological advisor to the National Council of Churches, waxes indignant about various neoconservative violations of political correctness, especially those respecting the Third World, blacks, gays, and women. For someone who professes a desire to understand neoconservatism because it is "the most instructive opposition that any reconstructed progressive politics is likely to encounter," Dorrien often overlooks the ideas of his subjects in order to impugn their motives and question their moral rectitude and even intelligence. To expropriate an old line from Irving Kristol, Gary Dorrien, morally opposed to capital punishment, has decided to moralize neoconservatism to death.

Nowhere is his moralizing more stringent than with the issue of feminism. In the introduction to the book, Dorrien writes that feminism is the issue about which he most disagrees with the neoconservatives, and with few exceptions he characterizes neoconservatives as obsessive antifeminists. He writes:

> It was uncomprehending [to neoconservatives] as to why so many obviously intelligent and compassionate people would become feminists. The experiences of discrimination, exploitation, and abuse described by feminists were abruptly dismissed by neoconservatives as either unbelievable or childish. The differences between difference-oriented and equality-oriented feminisms were treated by neoconservatives as contradictions. . . .

AND HE EMPLOYS similar language in confronting Peter Berger on Third World development, Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter on homosexuality, Irving Kristol on the United Nations, and Michael Novak on liberation theology.

Into his moralizing, Dorrien weaves attacks on the character and intelligence of many of his subjects. He asserts, for instance, that Irving Kristol and Michael Novak are hypocritical in their warnings about the new class because they have neither renounced their chairs at the American Enterprise Institute nor forsworn all grants. He thus ignores the clear and simple truth that the neoconservatives do not object to the professional class in general, but only to those who in various ways accept the largesse of business and government only to subvert the ideas of republican democracy and capitalism and the bourgeois values that sustain them.

Dorrien attempts to rebut the neoconservatives by trapping them in the interviews that they agreed to give him. The most striking example of this involves Peter Berger, whom Dorrien casts as the neoconservative with a human face by comparison with the rudely ideological Podhoretz, Novak, and Kristol.

MARK GERSON, *a new contributor to* FIRST THINGS, *is a senior at Williams College.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Questioning Berger's support for capitalism as the key to economic development, Dorrien asks him about some obscure socialist scheme in Sweden with which Berger is apparently unfamiliar. Dorrien proudly quotes Berger's reply, "If they go ahead with it, and it works, this would falsify my argument. . . . Of course, I don't think this would work, either. . . . But it sounds like a fascinating empirical case to me."

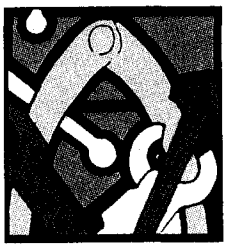
In his opening chapter, Dorrien asserts that the forerunners of neoconservatism are the anti-Communist writers James Burnham and Sidney Hook. While Burnham and Hook were powerful and important thinkers, their influence on the neoconservatives was primarily limited to anticommunism. After renouncing first Marxism and then liberal anticommunism, Burnham became a columnist for *National Review*, which had a less than happy relationship with the nascent neoconservatives until the 1970s. Hook, while the premier anti-Communist theorist of his day, maintained an allegiance to socialism and a hostility to religion about which the neoconservatives occasionally, albeit lovingly, despaired.

RATHER THAN Burnham and Hook, the true philosophical underpinnings of neoconservatism can be better traced to thinkers like Lionel Trilling and Reinhold Niebuhr. The concepts of what Trilling termed "variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty," developed in seminal works such as his *The Liberal Imagination* and Niebuhr's *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness,* betrayed grave doubts about the meliorist assumptions of the liberal view of human nature. While Trilling's opposition to what he termed the "adversary culture" and "the orthodoxy of dissent" and Niebuhr's emphasis on the need for religion to supplement bourgeois values directly influenced the neoconservatives, their broader theories regarding the limits of human action and the inefficacy of utopianism provided neoconservatism with a philosophical framework upon which many of its most crucial tenets and positions would be based.

As a result of missing the formative stages of neoconservatism, Dorrien misinterprets and ignores many of the most important tenets of neoconservatism. In a study of intellectual history, a solid grasp of philosophical foundation is essential because thinkers directly build upon those who inspire them. In his misconstruing the roots of neoconservatism, Dorrien's failure to understand the real framework of his subject was inevitable.

Especially striking in this regard is Dorrien's discussion of religion. He writes, "The neoconservatives

THE Culture *of* Interpretation



Christian Faith and the Postmodern World

ROGER LUNDIN

"Substantial and excellent!" —DAVID F. WELLS

"A remarkably clear overview and Christian critique of contemporary critical theory, and it is grounded on an insightful understanding of American cultural history." —GEORGE M. MARSDEN

"Lundin provides concise analysis and strategies for critique which will be of considerable interest to teachers and practitioners of textual interpretation and literary theory for whom questions of metaphysics and ethics have not become a forbidden science." —DAVID LYLE JEFFREY

"Theological reflection on culture at its best. . . . This book will inform and challenge the general reader and should send Christian theologians back to their drawing boards to craft an apologetic that is at once faithful to its past and meaningful in the present." —PHILIP C. RULE

Paper, $22.99 • ISBN 0-8028-0636-8

327

At your bookstore, or call 800-253-7521 FAX 616-459-6540

WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.

255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49503

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were too theologically diverse to make common theologically based arguments and too utilitarian to make the effort. . . . They did not agree . . . on the role that religious institutions should play in society. . . ." In fact, however, one of the few points of universal agreement among neoconservatives is the importance of a religious foundation both to bourgeois morality and democratic capitalism. Indeed, an interesting and unstudied aspect of neoconservatism is how people of backgrounds as diverse as that of Norman Podhoretz and Richard John Neuhaus could come to such agreement on issues of religion and public life. While Dorrien does not mention it, Michael Novak happens to be not only one of the great economic philosophers of our era, but one of the most profound and powerful philo-Semitic gentiles writing on Judaism today. To ignore the role of religion in neoconservatism is to overlook crucial tenets of neoconservatism relating to morality, community, and the spiritual requirements for fulfillment in contemporary society.

Unfortunately, Dorrien's book on neoconservatism fits into a mold of writing about the subject to which James Q. Wilson alluded as early as 1980. Since World War II, he said, serious, thinking liberals have bemoaned the absence of a Coleridge for their Mill—a good American conservative school of thought to challenge them. *National Review* came along in 1955, but for most of these liberals *National Review* was not what they had in mind. Perhaps because there are many neoconservatives who do not like the label and hence will not openly defend what it stands for, the defenses of neoconservativism have been greatly outnumbered by attacks. Here we have one of those attacks, personally nasty and—or maybe because—intellectually thin.

YET IT IS necessary to defend neoconservatism for reasons that go beyond protecting the reputations of the men and women tough enough to carry their fight, as it were, to the street. To agree with Gary Dorrien that "neoconservatism had become too conservative to reclaim a place in the Democratic party," rather than to assert that the Democratic party had become too liberal for the neoconservatives, is to accord present-day liberalism the intellectual roots it does not have, the continuity it has not maintained, and the legitimacy it has not earned. Rather, it has been the neoconservatives, with a view of human nature chastened by the admonitions of Trilling and Niebuhr, who have sought to craft a philosophy responsive to the rough matter of human nature and the American imperative of progress. It is this philosophy and the legacy which it represents that demands a defense in the chronicles of modern intellectual history.

After Hell

AGAINST ALL ODDS: HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AND THE SUCCESSFUL LIVES THEY MADE IN AMERICA. By WILLIAM B. HELMREICH. *Simon & Schuster. 348 pp. $23.*

Reviewed by **Amity Shlaes**

ONE OF THE more controversial events in our cultural life this year has been the opening of Washington's Holocaust Museum. The Holocaust was not an American tragedy, the arguments against the structure went; why give it Mall real estate that elevates its status in our history to that of the events recalled by the Smithsonian or the Washington Monument? The strongest case against the museum's location, and one made by a group that included many Jews, was the case against the "Americanization" or "federalization" of the tragedy of a specific group. If, for example, this country's relatively small population of Jews deserves such a grand monument to the deaths of their cousins, what next? Doesn't then every other group here with some collective memory of suffering—from homosexuals, say, to Armenians—deserve its own House of Sorrow?

For many, this objection weakened at the sight of the museum's sobering contents. It weakened yet more at the sight of the aged concentration camp survivors who spoke on the day of the museum's opening. Soon—within five or ten years, or, certainly, a generation—we may need the museum to tell us about what the Nazis did. The survivors themselves will be gone.

Now author William Helmreich offers us a precious record of that disappearing group. *Against All Odds* is the story of a small number of people: the 140,000 or so survivors who landed on American shores. From their first days in the resettlement center of the Hotel Marseilles on New York's 103rd street, the survivors in Mr. Helmreich's book managed to make their way. The majority, in Mr. Helmreich's telling, were able to find new lives, largely because of simple—in fact, rather old-fashioned—virtues. The survivors themselves, however, self-effacingly attributed much of their good fortune to luck: Mr. Helmreich reports that 74 percent of them cited this as the main factor in their survival. He cites a more significant factor: simple integrity.

> The story of the survivors is one of courage and strength, of people who are living proof of the indomitable will of human beings to survive and of their tremendous capacity for hope. It is not the story of a remarkable people. It is a story of just how remarkable people can be.

TO READ *Against All Odds* is to retrace that story. The survivors did not make their passage on V-E Day, 1945; many of them languished in displaced persons camps in Europe for years, long enough to witness ugly events like the resurgence of European anti-Semitism: July 1946, for instance, brought the murder of forty-one Jews in an infamous

---

AMITY SHLAES *is Editorial Features Editor at the* Wall Street Journal *and author of* Germany: The Empire Within *(Farrar, Straus).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pogrom in Kielce, Poland. Only after 1948, when Harry Truman signed a bill allowing 205,000 refugees to enter the United States, could they board the boats at Bremerhaven. A "small army" of social workers and charitable groups managed their arrivals—from Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society workers in their white enamel badges to the volunteers from the National Council of Jewish Women (light blue silk armbands). The welcome net extended outside New York: the Jewish community in Montgomery, Alabama, distributed the following announcement:

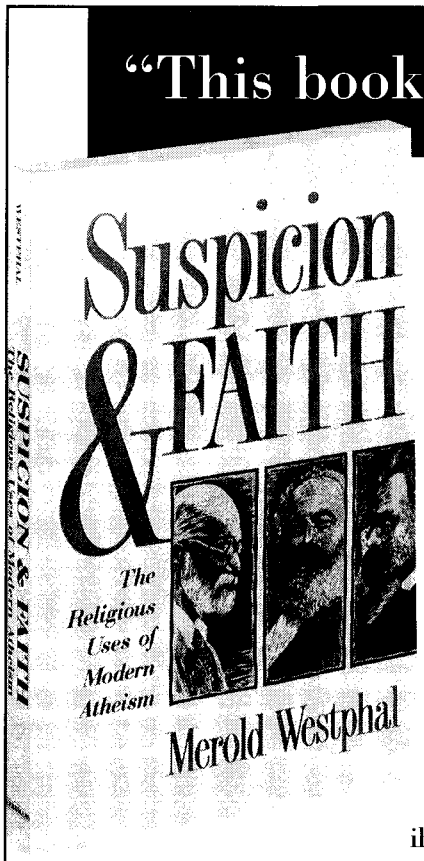
> THIS IS WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES!: Mr. and Mrs. JOSEPH RABINOVITZ and Children May Move Next Door to You Next Week. THEY SPEAK NO ENGLISH! THEY SPENT FOUR YEARS in DACHAU. THEY HAVE NO MONEY, NO JOB . . . what's to be done for them???

Such shielding didn't entirely protect the new arrivals from feeling both trivial and profound disappointment with their new homeland. One immigrant tells of how exhilaration "was soon replaced by anger and disbelief when he discovered that a local synagogue in Washington Heights denied him admission to its Yom Kippur services because he had not purchased a ticket, even though he explained that he had only recently been liberated from a concentration camp. 'I'm in America? Where Am I? They call this liberty?' he exclaimed bitterly." Another survivor, Gilbert Metz, describes his first confrontation with bigotry:

> My uncle had two water fountains in the store: one was marked "Colored" and the other "White." And it was a big mystery to me. So one day my uncle said, "Why are you always looking at those fountains?" "Because," I said, "when you press a button, the same color water comes out." He laughed and explained to me: "Well, one is for the *schvartzes* and one is for the whites." I thought it was the silliest thing I'd ever seen.

Such customs evoked harsher words from another arrival settling in the South, Lola Shtupak: "My aunt gave her black maid food that we wouldn't eat and made her eat it outside, like a dog. When I fought with her, she called me a Communist. So I saw this was no life for me, and I left for New York." Another group of immigrants had doubts about choosing America over the Jewish homeland. One of them, a Vera, reports that "From 1948 to 1950 I was thinking of making *aliyah*. . . . I had wanted to go to Israel all my life and now I could go. I

"This book is a gem."*



"Combining imaginative wit and prophetic insight, Westphal engages—and calls for others to engage — the diverse yet overlapping critiques of Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche. His style is accessible, his analysis profound. Believers and unbelievers alike ought to be 'edifyingly disturbed' by Westphal's analysis. The book deserves to be widely read and studied."
—L. GREGORY JONES*

"In addition to giving an illuminating and powerful reading of three of the most important contemporary professedly antireligious thinkers, Westphal's *Suspicion and Faith* sets the stinging critiques of Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche in the context of the biblical condemnation of idolotry and all human attempts to make God in our image and use God for our purposes. It is a disturbing yet helpful book."
—C. STEPHEN EVANS

ISBN 0-8028-0643-0 • *Paper, $19.99*

At your bookstore, or call 800-253-7521 FAX 616-459-6540
337 WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49503

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

felt it was my own country. . . ." While in Israel, though, she went to hear violinist Isaac Stern and ended up returning to America after all—she married him.

Like Vera Stern, most of those who arrived in America ended up staying, finding jobs, and, frequently, moving into apartments in New York neighborhoods such as Manhattan's Upper West Side, Washington Heights, or Brooklyn's Borough Park. Not all survivors chose the city, though. As in Israel, the pull of agriculture was strong, in large part because it was different: "The image of the farmer raising cows and chickens stands in sharp contrast to the stereotype of the city-dwelling, business-oriented Jew." Helmreich's research found that "some 1,500 Holocaust survivors and their families selected farming as an occupation after the war." New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut attracted the greatest number of farmer survivors, Helmreich reports. And as in Israel, many of the farming experiments were mixed successes at best. In Vineland, New Jersey, or Liberty, New York, the arrivals joined already-established Jewish communities. The farms did offer several advantages, including the chance to avoid the problem of language: "With the chickens you could talk any language."

SUCH QUOTATIONS highlight one difference between the survivors and their closest predecessors, the Jewish emigrants of the 1930s, namely, education. No Hannah Arendts, these newcomers had spent what should have been their school and university years in gentiles' closets, or in the camps. Unable to glide into the academy, they turned to more time-honored methods of finding their way in America. Jack Werber recounts an immigrant's tale so classic it sounds hackneyed:

> I took my own place on Avenue C making trimmings on collars. I borrowed one thousand dollars and my partner put in one thousand. Then we sold earmuffs. I worked twenty-five hours a day. I never saw the children awake. Then came Davy Crockett and we started with the coonskin caps. They came with trucks and they were selling like hot potatoes.

The survivors were classic immigrants in another sense: they didn't assimilate, leaving that challenge to their children. Marrying mostly among themselves, and at a high rate (in 1989, Helmreich reports, 83 percent of survivors were married, compared to 62 percent of American Jews in the same age group), they often resorted to what Helmreich calls "pragmatic marriages"—made more for a bed, a blanket, and security than for any grander dreams. Over the decades, they continued to spend time with other survivors; old differences between them sometimes melted. "Whatever prejudices we had against the Ostjuden [East European Jews] were burned at Auschwitz," one German survivor tells Helmreich.

In recent years observers of survivors have been troubled by what seems to be a disorienting trend—the late suicides or mystery deaths of survivors who distinguished themselves particularly in the postwar years. There was the suicide of Bruno Bettelheim. Primo Levi, one of the most balanced and gifted chroniclers of life in Auschwitz, died as the result of a probable suicide in Italy. Even the mercurial Jerzy Kosinski chose to do away with himself. Helmreich notes the phenomenon, but the weight of his evidence seems to suggest that such cases are exceptions. On one page, for example, we get the story of Major General Sidney Schachnow, a former commander of the Green Berets in Vietnam. When Helmreich interviewed Schachnow, he was serving as commanding officer of U.S. troops stationed in Berlin. It wasn't Schachnow's first time in Central Europe though: he had spent time in his childhood in a Lithuanian concentration camp. Of his decision to join the military, the general gives a typically low-key account: "I looked upon it as a kind of temporary relief [from family pressures] but once I got in there, I kind of liked it." Equally low-key is the account of Tom Lantos, whose American voyage started on the boat Marine Falcon, continued through a doctoral program at the University of California, Berkeley, and eventually led to the U.S. Congress. Of his current job he says, "I feel in many ways that in Congress, I'm here . . . for all the survivors."

HOW, THOUGH, does the average survivor—by Helmreich's account a politically average, even marginal person—perceive his new homeland? Despite the immigrants' love of America, America's problems, and in particular American racism, has preoccupied many survivors. Helmreich describes, for example, one Sandy Meyer, who had been hidden as a child during the war, and records that she "remembered reading an article in a newspaper that anti-Semitism in the U.S. had risen 12 percent between 1986 and 1987. As a result she had given serious consideration to encouraging her children to move to Israel."

Many observers—indeed, many prominent ones—have long poohpoohed such worries. They have argued, with some reason, that Jewish organizations actually foster anti-Semitism in the general American public by "crying wolf" at any tiny incident in what in past decades has been a remarkably tolerant culture. In the year or two since Helmreich completed his research, however, new events have to some extent justified the concerns Helmreich describes. The wide-scale and public racism in New York's 1991 Crown Heights riots—members of the local black community shouted "kill the Jews" as they attacked orthodox Jews on the street—is perhaps the most prominent example here. In Helmreich's book, for example, Anti-Defamation League director Abe Foxman is "upbeat" about the problem of anti-Semitism: Foxman says that "thirty, forty years ago, there would have been anti-Semi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tism" in America. Now "there isn't." Since Helmreich finished his book, though, events like Crown Heights have led Foxman to worry publicly about America's future.

Against All Odds is best when it delivers raw testimony from individual lives. It is weaker and more frustrating when it moves into social science—Helmreich develops thematic chapters with titles such as "the social world of the survivor" or "living with memories." Mr. Helmreich is a sociologist, and the book is the product of many years of research, so his impulse to attempt something grander than mere reportage is certainly understandable. But the result is that he frequently sacrifices a good story by chopping it up into smaller units and dropping them in at convenient spots in his narrative. Thus Abe Foxman—the ADL director and one of Mr. Helmreich's most fascinating subjects—gets mentions at six points in the book. Nowhere, though, does the author take time to unfold Foxman's story of being a toddler hidden in Christian homes, of being kidnapped, and of a rough economic beginning in the new world.

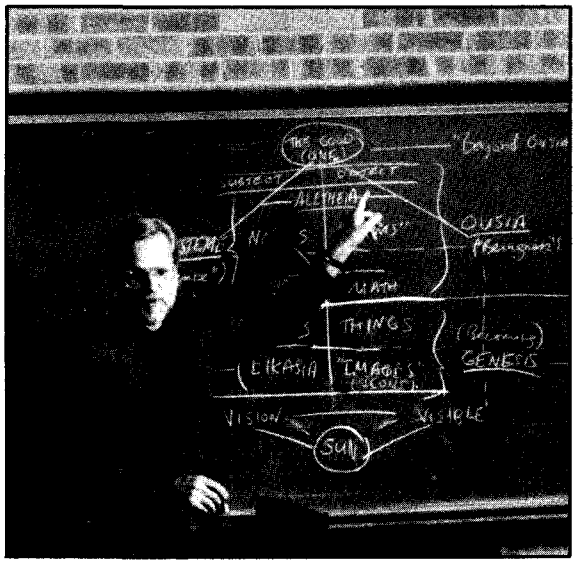
Against All Odds, then, doesn't replace previous works on survivors, such as Dorothy Rabinowitz's 1979 book *New Lives*, which included, for example, a gripping account of a confrontation between the survivor Stella and the woman who had once guarded her at Maidanek. European and Israeli publishers, too, have offered more dramatic testimony of the world's Anne Franks—for me, for example, Inge Deutschkron's *Ich trug den Gelben Stern* ("I Wore the Yellow Star") will always be the most memorable story of childhood underground in Berlin. It is the optimism of Helmreich's subjects, though, that redeems his book. In one sense, it is a very American book, in which the American immigrant impulse ("success at any cost") shows itself strong enough to vanquish dark European experience, over and over again.

Syllabus Errorum

GOD'S POLITICIAN: POPE JOHN PAUL II, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER. By DAVID WILLEY. *St. Martin's. 258 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by **George Weigel**

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, as the long pontificate of Paul VI drew to a close, a consensus on the qualifications for the next pope began to take shape among liberal Catholic opinion-makers. The new pope should be a vigorous, confident leader: at home in the modern world, a man of deep spirituality, conversant with contemporary intellectual life, an activist rather than a recluse, an adept



TRUTH AND VIRTUE.

FREEDOM AND JUSTICE.

REVELATION AND DISCOVERY.

At the University of Dallas, we believe
that these themes are the threads
which make up the fabric of the human experience,
and that they deserve our fullest attention.

UNIVERSITY of DALLAS

The Catholic University for Independent Thinkers
1845 East Northgate Drive • Irving, TX 75062-4799
(214) 721-5266 • (800) 628-6999

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

publicist, a Christian who radiated hope—in short, a charismatic figure who could revitalize the public face of Roman Catholicism at the end of the twentieth century. The new pope should also be a man of the Second Vatican Council, committed to securing the Council's teaching in the thought and practice of the Church. Building on the wayfaring innovations of Paul VI, the new pope should escape the gilded cage of the Vatican and bring the Gospel message to the nations: what the Church and the world needed, it was thought, was more an apostle than a CEO of Roman Catholic Church, Inc. Ideally, the new pope would have extensive pastoral experience, and, longest of all long shots, he should be non-Italian.

All of which is precisely what the College of Cardinals gave us on October 16, 1978, when, after the brief "September papacy" of Albino Luciani, it elected Karol Józef Wojtyla, the archbishop of Kraków, as the 263rd successor of Peter as Bishop of Rome.

Why, then, have Catholic liberals been so unenthusiastic, to put it gently, about this papacy and this pope?

LITTLE DIRECT light is shed on that question by *God's Politician*, alas. David Willey, the BBC's correspondent in Rome since 1972, has accompanied John Paul II on many of his pastoral pilgrimages abroad. Yet rarely has the old saw—"travel narrows the mind"—been vindicated more completely than in this sour, indeed mean-spirited, book. The more of John Paul Mr. Willey sees, the less he likes—indeed, in an act of extraordinary *chutzpah* (even for a journalist), our cradle Catholic author confesses, in his prologue, that while his "faith in God is intact," his "allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church has been suspended" while he "examine[s] this brief Polish interlude in its long history."

David Willey's (mis)understanding of the Church is succinctly captured in a single sentence toward the end of his book: the Church is "a hierarchical organization run by ecclesiastics who are more interested in the application of rules than in kindling the religious convictions of their faithful." Given that lens, Willey's vision of John Paul's "bulldozer papacy" follows predictably enough. John Paul is a supremely gifted actor whose charming exterior masks his "inquisitorial and totalitarian methods," which are deployed in the service of his "implacable hostility to theological innovation," his determination to "stifle dissent among theologians and bishops," and his relentless opposition to the notion that "the Roman Catholic Church [has] a social and political role to play in helping peoples free themselves from oppressive regimes and social injustice."

But then, what are we to expect of a pope for whom "humility was never [a] distinguishing mark," a pastor who, "at a minimum personal security risk . . . passed by some of the most wretched and overcrowded slums in the world" while "cocooned behind the bulletproof windows of the papal limousine"? After all, this is a pope who still exhibits a bizarre "attachment to [the] quaint ceremonies and customs" of Polish "folk Catholicism"; little wonder that John Paul, the pope of the "iron fist," has "tended to deny those new freedoms" promised by Vatican II. And, as if this were not enough to seal the indictment, there is Willey's offended professional *amour propre*: "Wojtyla neither likes nor trusts the media. He finds its values shallow and its behavior intrusive. . . . He is usually disappointed by journalists. He cannot see why they should not be glad to act as evangelizers."

TO CALL *God's Politician* "tendentious" is to praise it too highly. For not only is our BBC correspondent given to the most extreme forms of ideological spin-doctoring, he can't even get the facts straight. Facts small and facts large are treated with similar insouciance. David Willey doesn't seem to know that the Soviet secret police were the "KGB." He misdates a crucial exchange of correspondence between Nikita Khrushchev and John XXIII by two years. He states, flatly, that Mikhail Gorbachev was the head of a "post-Communist Soviet Union." He thinks the "Internationale" was the Soviet national anthem. He mistakenly insists (twice) that John Paul II has "set up" a "Latin rite diocese" in Moscow. He confuses the Ark and Kolbe churches in Nowa Huta, the steel-milling suburb of Kraków. He misstates the ecclesiastical ranks of the secretary of state of the Holy See, the archbishops of Prague and Managua, the bishop of Gdansk, and a prominent Roman theologian. He understates the *Communist* count of Czechoslovak pilgrims at a great 1985 rally in Velehrad in Moravia by 200 percent. He misstates the authorship of the great petition for religious freedom in Czechoslovakia that eventually drew some 600,000 signatures in the years before the Velvet Revolution. He misstates (by seventeen years) the date on which Nicolae Ceausescu became leader of Romania. He believes, somehow, that Asia is "predominantly Muslim." He writes of Pope Pius XI in 1847—which happens to be ten years before Pius XI was born. He confuses the millennium of Polish Christianity with the 900th anniversary of the death of St. Stanislaw [Stanislaus], and then compounds the error by talking about the "950th anniversary." But it is when ideology rears its ugly head that David Willey's sloppiness runneth over: thus he hits the trifecta of errors in one sentence about Hans Küng, writing that the "German priest and theologian" (wrong) had been disciplined by the "Holy Office" (wrong) because he had "brought into discussion" the doctrine of papal infallibility (wrong).

Willey does give the pope credit for igniting the Revolution of 1989 in Poland; but beyond that concession to reality, *God's Politician* is of little use in understanding the pontificate of John Paul II. And while

---

GEORGE WEIGEL's *most recent book is* The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the book does illuminate, along the classic *via negativa*, certain facets of the current "progressive" Catholic funk, one hardly needs to spend twenty bucks and 240 pages revisiting those chronic complaints. Still, an interesting question remains: fifteen years into a papacy that, God willing, bids fair to extend into the third Christian millennium, why do people like David Willey (and the people who will take *God's Politician* seriously) have such a terribly difficult time with John Paul II?

I SUGGEST THAT at least four factors are in play here.

First, and at the most vulgar level, there is the matter of the pope's politics. John Paul II has been a sign of contradiction to Catholic "progressives" and to the journalistic establishment that feeds on the Catholic left and its discontents because he has refused to concede to fashionable opinion on the lifestyle issues that occupy such a large part of the contemporary *gauchiste* political agenda: abortion, euthanasia, "gay rights," "alternative marriage," and so forth. Thus David Willey devotes an entire chapter to deploring what he regards as the Pope's culpable indifference to the "world population bomb," but seems blithely unaware that his own sources on these matters—Worldwatch Institute, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Bank—are hardly to be regarded as purveyors of "value-neutral" analysis. (Willey even quotes, without comment, the claim by the deputy minister for family planning in Beijing that the notorious Chinese population-control program is "based upon education and voluntary acceptance of the country's true needs, not coercion.")

On other fronts, one might have expected that a pope who had helped his flock confront (indeed, overturn) the regimes of Marcos, Pinochet, and Stroessner would have earned some credits from political liberals. But John Paul's implacable anticommunism and his insistence that politics is an exercise in ethics have made him a deeply suspicious character even when, by prevailing establishment standards, he "does the right thing." Thus the discussion of the Revolution of 1989 in his 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, while challenging certain realist assumptions about the nature of international politics and the causes of the Communist crack-up, contained an even sharper (if largely implicit) criticism of ideological détentists and others on the Western left who lost sight of the moral catastrophe of communism during the last decades of the Cold War.

The politics of John Paul II have in fact been remarkably consistent. John Paul II enters the world of affairs, not as a diplomat, but as a pastor for whom the God-given human dignity of each member of the human family is a pressing concern. Or, as he put it himself during a flying press conference en route to South America in 1987, "I am not the evangelizer of democracy, I am the evangelizer of the Gospel. To the Gospel message, of course, belong all the problems of human rights, and if democracy means human rights it also belongs to the message of the Church." But it is not the Republic of Procedures and the Imperium of the Autonomous Self that John Paul has in mind when he talks about "democracy"; rather, it is a democracy that holds itself accountable to the "truth about man"—a truth which, against the grain of the times, John Paul insists we can know.

AT ANOTHER level (and as amply illustrated by *God's Politician*), the liberal problem with John Paul II is shaped by a liberal caricature of Polish Catholicism: a caricature, it should be noted, that was vigorously promoted by the propagandists of Poland's Communist regime. According to this burlesque view, the Polish Church is irremediably authoritarian, not-quite-in-touch-with "the spirit of Vatican II," excessively (even idolatrously) Marian in its piety—and, when you get right down to it, just a little dumb. But one need not romanticize the Polish experience of Catholicism in the twentieth century to understand just how grossly inadequate a portrait of a complex reality that parody is.

The Polish episcopate practiced collegiality (to be sure, under the firm leadership of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński) years before the Second Vatican Council. The Kraków-based *Tygodnik Powszechny* ("Universal Weekly") maintained a level of publishing excellence throughout the Communist period that any American or British Catholic journal would be proud to claim—and under far more difficult circumstances. Viewed from a more sympathetic angle, Polish Catholicism's Marian piety is in fact a striking example of successful "inculturation": 300 years before the ecclesiastical chattering classes knew there was such a thing. (Why do people who applaud the experimental Zairean liturgy find the

ADVERTISEMENT

Pilate Said To Him:
"What is Truth?"

In ***The Way of The World,*** one of the seven books which explores the answers, Alnita says, "The enormous pressures on modern people of population, competition, and speed are bringing each one of us to the point of decision in these revolutionary times. Freedom from drudgery, freedom for creativity and fulfillment, freedom by divine Grace–these are the cross-roads of choice. One way lies Heaven, other way lies Hell—in the imminent and Earthly futures and mankind elects *this* intersection in which to play Blind-Man's Bluff, to claim each person is morally autonomous, God is existentially irrelevant, and the game is much more fun if played entirely without rules."

Freedom and Equality; Technology and Morality; Poverty and Race; War and Peace; Justice and Compassion; Means and Ends. How can all be reconciled in a World of Peace?

Just send $10.40 ($11 in CA) to: Word Service FT, 921 Spencer Way, Los Altos CA 94024. Or free brochure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Black Madonna so hard to take?) And as for the charge that the Church now seeks to impose a "black totalitarianism" in the aftermath of "red totalitarianism," the truth is that the Polish hierarchy today is engaged in a great debate, which far transcends the usual liberal/conservative categories, over the role(s) of the Church in consolidating Polish democracy; and if the disagreements that exist (and they can be fierce) are not displayed for all the world to see, well, that may be because the Polish bishops think that collegiality implies not trashing your brother bishops in the pages of the *New Yorker*.

Then there is Polish Catholic intellectual life: an oxymoron, as far as David Willey and "progressive" Catholics are concerned. It is really quite striking that a pope who is, by any measure, a world-class intellectual has been dealt with so cursorily at that level of analysis. For beyond George Huntston Williams' *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action*, which was published a dozen years ago, there has been precious little serious American (or English-speaking) examination of John Paul II as a philosopher and theologian. Nor has the pope's ongoing involvement with the development of phenomenology and the impact of that involvement on his moral teaching and on the new empirical sensitivity about development economics demonstrated in *Centesimus Annus* been very carefully analyzed. As a philosopher, John Paul II is, admittedly, not a very easy read. But people prepared to plow through Rawls and Rorty, Foucault and Fish, Dworkin, Derrida, and MacKinnon ought to be willing to make at least some effort to understand the intellectual project of the world's most influential religious and moral teacher: unless, that is, people have succumbed to the lurking suspicion that there just may be something to all those jokes about "dumb Polacks."

IN THE FOURTH place, John Paul II has offended "progressive" sensibilities by insisting that Catholicism remains a communion capable of giving a coherent and authoritative account of the "hope that is within [us]" (1 Peter 3:5). Thus the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which the Holy Father calmly and persistently proclaims as an authentic fruit of the Second Vatican Council, has been subjected to a continuous stream of disapprobation, even ridicule, from American Catholic intellectuals, some of whom have publicly denied that such a compendium of belief is even possible "these days." (The ridicule has not been limited to our shores, of course; David Willey admiringly cites Leonardo Boff on the catechism, the Brazilian wondering "what exotic Roman Catholic being is going to be capable of creating a text equally applicable to the Eskimos of the Arctic, the destitute of Bangladesh, the German business tycoons of Bavaria, the Yuppies of New York, and the Xavante Indians of Brazil." So much for the universality of the Good News. Meanwhile, the catechism is selling like mad in France. France!)

And here, one suspects, is the root of the progressives' discontent with this papacy: it is not so much discontent with John Paul II (although he is surely to be regretted) as with the very idea of an authoritative teaching tradition, embodied in an ecclesial magisterium, capable of defining the boundaries of orthodoxy and orthopraxis, and convinced that there is a direct relationship between truth and freedom. John Paul II, the pope who acts like a pope, is thus "hard to understand"—a man who, in David Willey's judgment, "presides over a less and less tolerant Catholic Church." The great sadness here, of course, is the radical disjunction in the progressive mind between authoritative truth claims and tolerance: you can't have both. But the progressive mind waffles even on that point, for it certainly honors the authoritative truth claims of "women's rights" advocates and the United Nations Population Fund. It does seem to be a matter of whose truth is being gored.

The *National Catholic Reporter*'s Peter Hebblethwaite, who made "many valuable suggestions" to our BBC correspondent, recently informed readers of the *1993 Britannica Book of the Year* that "uncertainty about the pope's health . . . suggested that his pontificate was entering its final phase." One suspects, with little fear of offending against charity, that the wish is the father of the thought here. And while no one knows precisely what God has in mind for Karol Józef Wojtyla, it does not appear that the world is any less in need of a pope who will boldly preach, as John Paul has done from the day of his inauguration, "Be not afraid! Open the doors to Christ!" And, oh yes, the Holy Father was seen skiing this past Christmas season, six months after his colon surgery. Alas for Willey and Hebblethwaite (but happily for many, many others), they may have John Paul II to kick around for a whole lot longer.

BRIEFLY NOTED

NO LONGER EXILES: THE RELIGIOUS NEW RIGHT IN AMERICAN POLITICS. Edited by MICHAEL CROMARTIE. *Ethics and Public Policy Center. 153 pp. $18.95.*

To list the participants in the discussions from which this book emerged is to recommend the book most highly: George Marsden, Grant Wacker, Robert Booth Fowler, Robert Wuthnow, James Davison Hunter, Carl F. H. Henry, George Weigel. The press goes on about the ups and downs of the "Religious New Right" and the "Christian Right," generally failing to recognize the long-term consequences of a basic realignment in American religio-political life. This discussion is a bracing and informative antidote to the superficiality of most treatments of Christians who are "no longer exiles" in American public life.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism: Jewish and Christian Ethnicity in Ancient Palestine. By Doron Mendels. *Doubleday. 450 pp. $35.*

Mendels seems unaware that the term "nationalism" is anachronistic when speaking of antiquity (this book covers the period from 200 B.C. to 135 A.D.), yet as a survey of how Jewish attitudes toward temple, territory, kingship, and army were influenced by the Hellenistic kingdoms that surrounded them in the Hasmonean period the book is useful. The title (especially "Christian ethnicity in ancient Palestine") promises more than it delivers.

— Robert L. Wilken

Jesus Acted Up: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto. By Robert Goss. *HarperCollins. 240 pp. $19.*

In a longish appendix, Goss, formerly a Jesuit priest, explains his debt to Michel Foucault, the French thinker who fathered deconstructionism and died of AIDS. The disquisition on Foucault is among the intellectual pretensions of this hate-filled "queer" rant against Christianity in general and the Catholic Church in particular. "Queer dissidents can follow in the footsteps of the queer Christ; they can Stop the Church. Like Jesus, queer Christians can: ACT UP! FIGHT BACK! END HATE!" That is the author's final line, and it pretty well summarizes the tone and substance of the book.

A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation. By Wade Clark Roof. *HarperCollins. 311 pp. $20.*

Roof is a premier sociologist of religion and here presents disturbing findings, disturbing also to him. Whether Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, whether liberal or conservative, survey research suggests that the baby boom generation is "into" religious muddle. The big "values" are choice, tolerance of different lifestyles, mixing religion and psychology, and doing what works for you. Roof calls this religious consumerism and individualism "transformed narcissism," and he dolefully suggests that it is the American religious future. There are undoubted charms in a do-it-yourself syncretism, but they are not the faith-compelling charms of a coherent belief system. If Roof is right—and his data and arguments are persuasive—the question "What's so special about Christianity?" or "What's so special about Judaism?" has not been effectively answered for the generation now coming into its own.

Basic Christian Doctrine. By John H. Leith. *Westminster/John Knox Press. 350pp. $19.99 paper.*

Leith, professor emeritus at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, continues to be one of the most convincing exponents of Christian orthodoxy in Calvinist perspective. The book is what the title suggests, and it should be welcomed by those in the Reformed tradition, and by others who want to understand that important part of the Christian reality.

The Restless Mind: Alexis de Tocqueville on the Origin and Perpetuation of Human Liberty. By Peter Augustine Lawler. *Rowman & Littlefield. 200 pp. $21.95 paper.*

A learned and sympathetic profile of Tocqueville and his thought, with particular note of his debt to Pascal. The author suggests that our time, far from being the end of history, could be the new beginning of an understanding of the political that is based upon the human aspiration to a freedom that cannot be comprehended or contained by theory. Toward that end, he persuasively recommends Tocqueville as our guide.

The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda. By Amitai Etzioni. *Crown. 323 pp. $22.*

In 1991 Etzioni issued a manifesto that launched what came to be called "the communitarian movement." The document was subscribed by a broad array of thinkers and political actors, gaining deserved attention for a position that intends to rehabilitate down-home

By any standard, Opus Dei is an extraordinary phenomenon. Equally extraordinary is the story of its founder, who was beatified last year, the Blessed Josemaria Escriva.

In *What is Opus Dei?* Dominique Le Tourneau presents all the important facts about this institution of the Church, which in 60 short years has spread throughout the entire world: its history, how it is organized, its aims, how one joins, what its members do, how it is financed, its critics, and its status in Church law. Also, its founder's charism, personality, and life's work are described.

This is a rigorous and well-documented source book by someone who knows Opus Dei from the inside.

To order at the special discount price of $6.00 (shipping included): Send your check to: ***Scepter****,* P.O. Box 1270, Princeton, NJ 08542. *You may also charge the book to your credit card:* Master Card ___, Visa ___

Card No. _____ Expires:_____

Signature_____ (or call (800) 322-8773)

Please send me ____ copies of *What is Opus Dei?* My check (or credit card information) is enclosed.

Name_____

Street_____

City/State/Zip_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

truths about the necessary connections between rights and responsibilities. The author refuses to bite the bullet on such controverted issues as abortion (we can, he says, agree to disagree), but this elaboration of the original manifesto contributes to our political culture a set of arguments that constitute more than an attempted "middle way" between conservative and liberal. With an eye on very practical politics, Etzioni invites readers to reconsider fundamental ideas about the nature of politics in a nation conceived as a community of communities.

SOLZHENITSYN AND THE MODERN WORLD. By EDWARD E. ERICSON, JR. *Regnery Gateway. 433 pp. $24.*

It may be difficult for some to remember the astonishing impact of Alexander Solzhenitsyn in the early 1970s. He was lionized in the West as a Soviet "dissident," and seemed to sweep all before him after receiving the Nobel Prize for literature. After his expulsion from the Soviet Union, he took up residence in Vermont and began to address also the deficiencies of Western culture. Many intellectuals had begun to sour on Solzhenitsyn before that, but his commencement address at Harvard in 1978 was for many others the breaking point. Ericson of Calvin College in Michigan has been following Solzhenitsyn and his influence from the beginning, and in the present book he offers an admirable analytical chronicle of the ways in which Western intellectuals have misunderstood and distorted the person and work of Solzhenitsyn over the years. Solzhenitsyn is antimodern, antidemocratic, anti-Semitic, and a dangerous Slavic nationalist, it was variously charged. Ericson takes on each of these claims with great care and persuasive force. It becomes evident in his account that the response to Solzhenitsyn may not be the litmus test but is certainly a test of intellectual and moral integrity among Western thinkers. If they read this book, as they should, many will have reason to hang their heads in shame. Ericson does not deny that at points Solzhenitsyn may have inadvertently contributed to misunderstandings; he has indulged in the rhetorical excesses that typically attend prophecy. The author effectively makes the case that, although often not put in these terms, the deepest objection to Solzhenitsyn was the overt and explicit manner in which he spoke about faith in God and the importance of Orthodoxy to the future of Russia. Solzhenitsyn offended, and made no apology for offending, the secularist sensibilities of the cultural leadership in the West. (Ericson perhaps underestimates the degree to which Solzhenitsyn's support for a vigorous prosecution of the U.S. war in Vietnam alienated many of his former admirers.) Solzhenitsyn has been very quiet in the 1980s. Soon, it is reported, he and his family will be returning to Russia. That will almost certainly revive public interest in him and his work. Meanwhile, Edward Ericson has cleared the record of the many spurious charges that have been brought against Solzhenitsyn and, perhaps, prepared the way for a new and better-informed appreciation of one of the moral and intellectual icons of the twentieth century.

CHALLENGING THE CIVIL RIGHTS ESTABLISHMENT: PROFILES OF A NEW BLACK VANGUARD. By JOSEPH G. CONTI and BRAD STETSON. *Praeger. 240 pp. $22.95.*

On this account, the existence of a black underclass has less to do with racism than with misguided government policies that perversely harm the people they are designed to help, and with a disintegration in the black community of society's "little platoons," e.g., families, churches, neighborhood associations. Though many of the arguments here will be familiar to readers of this journal, the book is noteworthy, among other reasons, for its intellectual profiles of four black writers—Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, Robert Woodson, and Glenn Loury—who oppose the current civil rights establishment, with its emphasis on renewal via a massive, bureaucratic welfare state.

Loome Theological Booksellers
320 North Fourth Street
Stillwater, Minnesota 55082
612-430-1092

- The largest stock of out-of print religious books in North America
- Specialists in scholarly titles in all languages
- Written want lists welcome; catalogues issued
- Libraries appraised & purchased anywhere in North America

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Messianic Secret

At a parish council meeting, some women clustering together
decide, whispering so as not to be overheard and hurt his
feelings, that the priest's shirt, decidedly dirty (for God's
sake a smear of fast food and the brown burn of cigarette on
one pocket) is but the latest sign of domestic disorder, and
that it is time for a good soul with nothing but time on her
hands to finally take over his housework. And, so, now, there
is the woman who does the priest's laundry although her name
is not listed in the church bulletin of course. She is, as
everyone says, the salt of the earth, or, at least, the knees
of Our Lady of Sorrows, this old woman who, for years, kneels
in a back pew although the more hurried parishioners claim never
to have seen her, which does not prevent them from asking her
to take the job, even before they recognize that no one else
will do it. And, the woman accepts the committee's appointment,
of course, although her motivations would surprise them, having
little to do with devotion to the priest and even less to
parochial duty. She also does not look, although her visitors
offer this as payment, for spiritual rewards in humble service.
Instead, in the priest's mildewed basket spilling rumpled sheets
and dirty tablecloths, she sees images on a silver screen, the
possibilities of blank canvases. The laundry clutches at her
wrists with steamy surfaces, harder to shake than the toddlers
in the nursery who weekly tug at her balance as if demanding
a last look, some rough stroke of recognition before the familiar
strangers take them home. Without softness, she gathers them:
the soggy towels and soggier infants. No call for humility,
nor pride in her work; she simply knows what she sees and that
her vision is a poem whispered in an old lover's foreign words
which only she can translate and then swallow like a coded
message in a child's mysterious game. Massaging her arthritic
hands to a new morning's work, she steps to the line and takes
the pin from her mouth closed against spills, closed against
loss. Weak eyes water against the strong winter sunlight.
She wipes the tears and lifts her arms into the whiteness, the
transfiguration.

Elizabeth Creamer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Recruiting for the Revolution

The Nation is ecstatic. Its cover story "The Gay Moment" evinces high confidence that the media is right in declaring that we are now in "the gay nineties." "Ten years ago there might have been one gay issue in the news every month or so," says *The Nation*. "Now there are dozens at the same time. The tortured topic of gays in the military is far from the 'nonstarter' the late Bush re-election campaign, incredibly, assumed it to be. It strikes at the authority of the defense establishment in political life and, on a deeper level, subverts traditional gender and sexual roles as no movement has done since the dawn of modern feminism."

The story, as might be expected, devotes much attention to "Christian fundamentalists" who resist the revolution. "Gay cavaliers," we are told, are locked in long-term battle with "Christian roundheads." The fundamentalists are accused of promoting hate and fear, putting them in league with the Nazis and their anti-Semitic propaganda. On the one hand, we are informed that gays want nothing more than their civil rights, decent treatment, and safety from the violence of "homophobia." On the other, *The Nation* describes the movement in terms of radical and sweeping revolution quite beyond anything usually depicted in the anti-homosexualist literature of the right:

"But the gay nineties is not only about civil rights, tolerance, and legitimacy. What started tumbling out of the closets at the time of Stonewall [the late sixties protest by which the movement marks its beginning] is profoundly altering the way we all live, form families, think about and act toward one another, manage our health and well-being, and understand the very meaning of identity. All the crosscurrents of present-day liberation struggles are subsumed in the gay struggle. The gay moment is in some ways similar to the moment that other communities have experienced in the nation's past, but it is also something more, because sexual identity is in crisis throughout the population, and gay people—at once the most conspicuous subjects and objects of the crisis—have been forced to invent a complete cosmology to grasp it. No one says the changes will come easily. But it's just possible that a small and despised sexual minority will change America forever."

Filling the Vacuum

It will change everything, forever, and with a new cosmology yet. Jesse Helms claims that they just want to have sex with our children. Little does he know. According to *The Nation*, the movement is virtually unstoppable. The editors are sure that the *New York Times* is solidly enlisted. "Gay coupling celebrations haven't cracked the *New York Times* society pages yet, but the breakthrough surely is only a few months or a year away. The *Times*, which allowed the word 'gay' as a descriptive and synonym for 'homosexual' to be used only a few years ago, had a startling change of heart and is now consistently pro-gay. New York City, with the biggest out gay population in the world, is singularly bereft of credible gay newspapers, so the *Times* and the *Village Voice* have more or less filled the vacuum." There are homosexual rags such as *The Advocate*, but they still smell of a subcultural mentality when the time has come to take over the culture. (Rick Brookhiser recently remarked that the *Times* has become *The Advocate* with stock reports and foreign news.)

What *The Nation* says about the *Times* is, regrettably, very much on the mark. "Pinch" Sulzburger, who has succeeded to the publisher's chair, has let it be known repeatedly that the *Times* will no longer reflect the views of straight white males. The change has been dramatic, with gay and lesbian reporters identifying themselves as such in news columns and making no apology for the slant of their stories. The traditional line between editorial and reporting is now but a vague memory at the *Times*, at least when it comes to coverage of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the culture and, above all, homosexuality. It is sometimes hard to know what the writer-editors want to convince us of. The daily half-dozen stories on matters homosexual would tell us, in one way or another, that at least half of our neighbors are gay and lesbian, and that they are just like us. Except that they are much more creative and lead much more interesting lives, and they are terribly in need of our sympathy and admiration. In addition, thousands upon thousands of them are afflicted with an awful disease that somehow just happened to them.

That is pretty much the sum of the message of what is undoubtedly the nation's foremost gay newspaper. But there is still pushing at the envelope, so to speak. For instance, it is true that, at least at this writing, the *Times* does not include homosexual "marriages" in its social announcements. But already there is "Out and Organized," a huge two-page spread in the Sunday "Styles of the Times." This item presents, if we may put it very carefully, the case for recruiting young people to the homosexual "lifestyle." (The term "lifestyle" is considered homopolitically incorrect but it is used in the article. Even the *Times* slips from time to time.)

The subhead declares, "As the national gay movement shies away from the subject of homosexuality among the young, some gay teenagers are determined to open the subject up." No more shying away from anything. Come out, come out, wherever you are. As the story makes clear, it is not actually the teenagers who are opening up the subject as it is organizations run by adults who want to "help" teenagers identify themselves as homosexual. The writer-editor (writitor might be the appropriate term) asserts, "In fact, it's not the agencies recruiting the youth, but the youth recruiting the agencies." That is not what one gathers from the story, but there is no doubt that the phenomenon is rightly termed recruitment.

A Kind of Magic

In the lead is the Hetrick-Martin Institute, described as "a nonprofit organization dedicated to the special needs of young homosexuals." Hetrick-Martin runs the Harvey Milk High School for gay and lesbian teenagers, an institution that is part of the New York City public school system. Thanks to a grant from *Vogue* magazine, the institute has recently moved into a very fashionable new headquarters on Astor Place. H-M played a key role in promoting the aborted Rainbow Curriculum in the city's elementary schools, and sends consciousness-raisers into public school classrooms to teach, as our writitor puts it, "tolerance of nontraditional life styles, including homosexuality." Some of the friends and supporters of the gay movement are made nervous by the emphasis on reaching out to young people. The American Friends Service Committee, sometimes called Quakers, has withdrawn financial support. "The youth issue was divisive," said a spokesman. The distinctions between helping, recruiting, and seducing are not easy to maintain.

The distinctions are more directly challenged by gay activist Frank Browning in his new book *The Culture of Desire: Paradox and Perversity in Gay Lives Today* (Crown). Browning writes, "If homophobes and fundamentalist preachers rant on about homosexuals recruiting the young because it's the only way to replenish their unholy ranks, then steal that language back. Yes, queer people want to recruit the young, not by kidnapping young men . . . but by being mentors and role models who would show gay and lesbian adolescents that they are not alone, that they are not freaks, that they need not continue committing suicide at three times the rate of straight teenagers."

In their role as mentor and role model, according to Browning, homosexuals should not hesitate to introduce youngsters into the joys of promiscuity, the constant cruising for new sexual partners that marks the gay life. "The chanciness is part of the lasting magic of gay life," writes Browning, "a sort of radical plot twist that characterizes queer life and sets aside so many conventions of social judgment, class, race, and attitude, supplanting them with a direct and naive faith that bonds of great value can be forged on nothing more than instinct. . . . There is a genuine spiritual affirmation in discovering how often magic can arise between strangers—magic that in most of our waking moments we train ourselves not to see."

Critics say that homosexuality is perverse. Its apologists, such as Browning, respond that it is precisely the perversity—even flirting with disease and death in pursuit of erotic "magic"—that is the charm of the thing. Young men recruited to the pursuit are enabled to come to a new understanding of manhood. No longer obsessed with control and self-restraint the recruit can surrender, paradigmatically in the act of being penetrated, to the "equally strong appeal of powerlessness . . . the loss of control." "By celebrating his own penetration, the male offers himself as both an actual and a symbolic sacrifice and places his social identity at risk." Only homophobes and fundamentalist preachers, we are given to understand, would want to discourage young men from such experience.

Interestingly, the *Times* story does not mention the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), an organization that has the merit of being utterly straightforward on a subject about which the *Times*, at least at this point in its political evolution, feels compelled to be somewhat coy. NAMBLA takes the position that the Greek erotic ideal is the adolescent or young adult, that sex between the young male and his mentor is a thing of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

beauty and spiritual exaltation that ought not to be prohibited by law. Because the indulgence of its aestheticism is in fact against the law, NAMBLA leads a shadowy existence and its membership tends to be secretive, although every once in a while it breaks into public view, causing consternation in the "mainline" gay movement that is bent upon assuring Americans that it wants nothing but tolerance while it is conducting a revolution that will change everything and everyone.

As for the *Times* story, it does include—perhaps as a gesture to journalistic ethics past—one critical voice. John P. Hale is identified as "a sometime legal adviser to the Archdiocese of New York," and he thinks programs such as Hetrick-Martin's are a very bad idea. Says Hale: "This is extremely destructive. In order to give comfort to that one out of one hundred who may ultimately choose a homosexual lifestyle, they are willing to put at risk the other ninety-nine by encouraging them to experiment in their formative stages of adolescence. If a man in his early thirties invited the neighborhood children over to tell them about their sexual options, parents would call the cops; the school system is just substituting young emissaries for the man next door. I call it proselytizing."

The executive director of H-M, a Frances Kunreuther, reacts angrily to Mr. Hale's statement. "We are trying to help young people have happy, productive lives. To be accused, still, of something so heinous—it's disgusting." But what on earth is so heinous? H-M and its allied organizations could hardly be more explicit in saying that they want adolescents to be favorably disposed toward homosexuality and to feel good about experimenting with their sexual desires. H-M declares that its purpose is to do precisely what Mr. Hale's private individual would be arrested for doing. Mr. Hale and 98 percent of the American people may think that what H-M does is wrong, but why should its executive director condemn the organization's stated mission as heinous? Certainly Frank Browning and a host of other gay apologists see nothing heinous in that mission.

"All the crosscurrents of present-day liberation struggles are subsumed in the gay struggle." There is no doubt some truth in that. One notes that the article in *The Nation* says that additional information on the struggle is available from the Washington office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Those looking back upon this curious period will likely be puzzled that the oldest of our national struggles, that for racial justice, should have been subsumed in the homosexualist cause. What *The Nation* and its kin view as the liberation struggles of our time may indeed be subsumed and submerged in the gay struggle.

What the gay movement demands—in both its "mainstream" and more aggressively "queer" manifestations—no society can grant except at the price of suicide. As some of its leaders acknowledge—Andrew Sullivan of *The New Republic* comes to mind—the "gay community" is not like other communities. It cannot produce another generation; it is parasitically dependent upon the generativity of others. The chatter about the gay nineties has been incessant this year. It seems there is hardly a national publication or television program that has not joined in the chorus, with the supportive accompaniment of the Clinton administration. But for all that, the proposals of the gay movement cannot, as the social science jargon puts it, be instantiated.

The best evidence suggests that 1 to 3 percent of males are exclusively homosexual in their orientation (the number of females is probably less than half that), and by no means are all of those out of the closet "gays." The gay movement is terribly fashionable, of course, and has many more friends than the number of homosexuals might suggest. Beyond the New York-Hollywood glitterati, the overwhelming majority of Americans want to be tolerant, or at least to be viewed as tolerant. From time to time, issues are thrown up by which the niceness of the American people is to be tested. The gay movement is the Be Nice to Negroes issue of 1993. It requires little. Americans will offer homosexuals, especially those dying of AIDS, sympathy galore, and will unreservedly condemn vulgar or violent displays of hostility toward them. But very few will willingly offer their children to the cause.

Ultimate Marginality, Immediate Damage

Because of its size, its behavior patterns, its pathologies, and, increasingly, because of its ideology, overt homosexuality will likely remain a subculture, a world within a world. It is a world that has been contained in many cultures and, until recently, was contained in this one. In the last several years, it has indeed "come out" in every respect. But what it has come out with has not met with general approval beyond the incorrigible disposition of most Americans to try to be tolerant toward the distasteful. It is quite possible that today's excitements about "the gay nineties" will, in ten years or so, seem as puzzling as the enthusiasm for "open marriage" two decades ago. Meanwhile, the homosexual movement will have done a good deal of damage, especially to young people who were persuaded to embrace publicly a "sexual identity" that may not be theirs, and a way of life that could be morally and physically lethal.

Meanwhile also, a subsiding homosexual subculture will not subside back to where it was. It has socially instantiated itself in other subcultures, notably in the academy, the liberal churches, and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

general media. And in sectors of entertainment: Broadway has this year been declared The Great Gay Way, and hardly a show has won an award that is not promoting the gay cause. But this, too, may pass. The media preoccupation of this year is not forever. It is the business of the media to move on to something else.

The academy and the churches are different. There, quotas and tenure tracks entrench the practice and ideology of homosexuality, and show every sign of greater influence in the future. Note, however, that some of the mainline/oldline churches are, so far successfully, resisting the final step of ordaining professed and active homosexuals. How long, or if, they will be able to hold out against their relevant academy—the seminaries and divinity schools—is an open question. The academy, at least the prestige sector of the academy, looks like a lost cause. At Harvard, Yale, or Columbia one publicly dissents from what *The Nation* approvingly calls "the gayocracy" at peril of one's career and safety.

In the general culture attention to the movement will subside in time. There are only so many people who can sustain a relentless interest in a phenomenon so inescapably marginal. As the media can and must move on to other things, so it is conceivable that in time institutions such as universities and churches too will put this behind them. It is conceivable, but not without great difficulty. An ancient subculture, the homosexual world, has come out and conquered important social territory. The question is whether this means the transformation of the culture or simply the expansion of a subculture. Our hunch is that the *Times* and its myriad allies in the culture wars have misread the signs of the times. Placing themselves under the banner of cultural revolution, they have turned themselves into creatures of a subculture.

At the same time, the line between culture and subculture becomes ever more indistinct. Andrew Sullivan of *The New Republic* says that we all live in subcultures now, the homosexual world being simply one among many. That, we expect, is wishful thinking on his part. Nonetheless, the undoubted expansion of the homosexual subculture has an important corrosive effect on the entire society. People are intimidated and confused; it becomes ever more difficult to articulate confidently the reasons why men and women are made for each other, and for children in marital fidelity. As Jerry Muller has explained ("Coming Out Ahead," August/September), reasons, if they are not articulated, cannot persuade. Many people will find it increasingly difficult to explain—and some courts will undoubtedly share the difficulty—why homosexual adults should not seek out adolescents and teenagers to help them "feel comfortable" with their homosexual desires. Innumerable mentors and role models, to use Mr. Browning's terms, are eager to be helpful.

"Out and Organized," the *Times* story on homosexual recruitment, depicts favorably a young Hispanic man of twenty who says he has been HIV-positive for seven years. That means he contracted the disease at age thirteen. "I'm glad," Luna Ortiz is quoted as saying, "that the older people put us where we are now, that they had their faces broken to open the doors for us." Some door. Some opening. The story features Mary Hansen, a seventeen-year-old lesbian who is active in the recruitment program. "I refuse to be afraid," she says. "And I do this out of an obligation not to the community but to myself. . . . Nobody should have a say in who I am."

"Nobody should have a say in who I am." Each girl, each boy, is an island, left to find out his/her "sexual identity" for him/herself, and sexual identity is the heart of who he/she is. And who is to criticize those adults, in the schools and in organizations such as Hetrick-Martin, who encourage them to discover, affirm, and act upon their sexual urges? To criticize is to suggest that there may be something wrong with homosexuality. To criticize is homophobic, discriminatory, and—in areas such as employment, housing, and other associations—increasingly illegal. In the therapeutic society, sexual recruitment is therapy. If, that is, you are certified as an expert and not just the randy thirty-year-old next door eager to entice the kids in for some kinky fun.

Refusing to Adjust

The media and entertainment blitz of 1993 notwithstanding, these are not the gay nineties. To paraphrase *The Nation*, the liberation struggles of the past are cross-dressing. Done up as the struggle for gay-lesbian-bisexual liberation, they have turned to astonishing advantage a general sympathy for those with a deadly disease that, we are instructed to believe, is unrelated to the behavior that they flaunt. It is a fashionable sham that will not last. It has not and it will not revolutionize the culture. As noted, it has apparently captured important cultural institutions, such as the university. But even there, developments such as gay studies may be as safely isolated ten years from now as the destructive silliness of black studies is mostly isolated on campuses today.

And in the general culture, as the ramifications of the gay assault sink in, there may be a salutary reaction that reinforces the heterosexual norm essential to society's survival and flourishing. Admittedly, this is a hopeful reading, and it may turn out to be wrong. Even if it is right, however, the current movement will have taken a terrible toll—most particularly among young people enlisted into a world of celebrated hedonism that is chiefly marked by loneliness, promiscuity, self-pity, suicide, and deadly disease. Hetrick-Martin, the *New York*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Times, and a host of others want to help young people adjust to that prospect. Those who have so far survived the culture wars with their sanity and compassion intact want to save them from that adjustment. Some children will be lost to the homosexual subculture, as many have been lost before. No matter how frazzled the ties, parents and families of such children have no moral choice but to try to reach out and hold on to their own. In the sorrow of their continuing love for their children, however, most of them will not give credence to, but will treat with deserved contempt, the claim that such loss is liberation.

FT

Pushing Old Ladies Around

The fallacy of moral equivalence was a big item during the Cold War. It was committed by many intellectuals in the West who noted that the Soviet Union and the democracies often behaved similarly and therefore their actions were morally equivalent. The fallacy is in ignoring the fact that, for all the moral ambiguities in international relations, one side was promoting tyranny and the other freedom. It's the old ends and means thing again. A person observes somebody pushing an old lady out of the path of an oncoming bus, and somebody else pushing another old lady in front of the bus. "They're morally equivalent," he declares. "They both push old ladies around."

Columnist Garry Wills was and is a notable practitioner of the fallacy. Taking note of Iraq's attempt to assassinate George Bush, he observes that the CIA in the 1960s tried to assassinate Fidel Castro. "Of course," he writes, "we did not call our CIA teams 'terrorists.' But it is difficult to see any moral difference between hit teams set out to dispatch Castro on the one side and to dispatch Bush on the other. We claimed the provocation in the case of Cuba, but Saddam believes he was more than provoked by Bush."

Surely one has to be an intellectual to have difficulty in seeing the moral difference. We hold no brief for CIA actions respecting Castro, but Castro, like Saddam, was and is a tyrant with the blood of thousands of victims on his hands. Castro also sponsored revolutionary aggression against neighboring nations. George Bush, on the other hand, was the democratically elected leader of a free nation conducting what was, most would argue, a just war against Saddam's undoubted aggression. What policies are justified by the moral difference between the behavior of the U.S. and that of Iraq is debatable, but there is a moral difference. Wills says that Saddam believes that his assassination attempt was justified because he was "more than provoked by Bush." Perhaps Saddam does believe that. The remarkable thing is that Garry Wills seems to believe it.

FT

The Holocaust Museum: Macabre Entertainment?

Philip Gourevitch is cultural editor of the *Forward*, a Jewish weekly, and he is not at all pleased by the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. It trivializes its subject, he claims in an article in *Harper's*, by turning the Holocaust into "another American theme park." He understands the reason for the museum, but he thinks it utterly wrongheaded. "The museum is meant to serve as an ideological vaccine for the American body politic. A proper dose of Holocaust, the thinking goes, will build up the needed antibodies against totalitarianism, racism, and state-sponsored mass murder." The Holocaust was a European event, says Gourevitch, and to make a comparison between America and Nazi Germany is profoundly misleading. In addition, he wonders how Jews are to establish a sense of real security in America if their primary public presentation of themselves is as victims.

When Gourevitch asked museum officials why America should set aside one of the last remaining pieces of land on the Mall to commemorate the Holocaust, they responded that a Native-American and an African-American museum are also planned. "The comparison explains nothing," he writes. "Those museums will present American history, not European history, and they will cover hundreds of years of each people's history, their accomplishments as well as their tragedies. Nobody talks about a Trail of Tears museum or a museum of slavery." We expect he is partially right. Given the current ideological climate, the Indian and black museums, if they are erected, will likely focus on the real or alleged crimes of America. In fact, one of Gourevitch's complaints is that the Holocaust museum lets Americans off too easily, inviting them to identify with both the victims and the saviors of the victims. In the one role they're innocent, in the other heroic. We will be surprised if the Indian and black museums will not be a sustained rant against

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American culpability for crimes against humanity.

Gourevitch concludes: "One way history is doomed to repetition at the Holocaust museum is that day in and day out, year after year, the videos of the *Einsatzgruppen* murders will play over and over. There, just off the National Mall in Washington, the victims of Nazism will be on view for the American public, stripped, herded into ditches, shot, buried, and then the tape will repeat and they will be herded into the ditches again, shot again, buried again. I cannot comprehend how anyone can enthusiastically present this constant recycling of slaughter, either as a memorial to those whose deaths are exposed or as an edifying spectacle for the millions of visitors a year who will be exposed to them. Didn't these people suffer enough the first time their lives were taken from them?"

The Holocaust museum is there. Its presentations can be changed over time, but the museum is an established fact. Whether it is a good thing for America or for Jews in America, we are not sure. And Gourevitch may be right in contending that, good intentions notwithstanding, it turns the horror of the Holocaust into a macabre entertainment. But his reference to an "edifying spectacle" is to the point. The other monuments and museums that attract millions of visitors each year to Washington do, all in all, present an edifying spectacle. They are intended to evoke a sense of national pride, and they invite us to reflect on both the greatness and failures of the American experiment. In this context, the Holocaust museum is, as many claim, "out of place." Maybe that is good. Maybe the dissonance will help Americans to understand that they are part of a larger and often shadowed world history.

But the Holocaust museum—reinforced by what can be expected in the museums of American Indians and blacks—may also symbolize a troubling turn in the national spirit. It might be a turn toward a morbid preoccupation with victimology and a turn away from a healthy sense of national achievement and purpose. Of course the celebration of the American experience can be excessive, even idolatrous. But so also indifference and denial with respect to the Providential gift that, all things considered, America has been to world history can be blasphemous.

Mr. Gourevitch is right in believing that the Holocaust museum raises important questions. Since it is not going to go away, we can only hope that the questioning will be turned to constructive purposes. Mr. Gourevitch is also right in believing that marching troops of schoolchildren through a horror show of what was done by awful people of what will seem to children a long way away and a long time ago is not necessarily a constructive purpose. Unless, of course, one thinks it constructive to lead them to think that America is, in some respects, ominously like Nazi Germany after all. In that event, visitors may be prompted to think about abortion, euthanasia, eugenics, and the sterilization of the poor. And that would be constructive.

FT

When Doves Become Hawks

The Mennonite center up the street sponsored a Sunday evening meeting on "Bosnia: The Pacifist Crisis." The crisis was that those who want to bomb the Serbs and send arms to the Muslims have a hard time squaring their politics with their pacifism. An odd thing about the Bosnian crisis is that the most notable opponents of U.S. military intervention were urging U.S. military intervention. Officials of the National Council of Churches and some Jewish organizations were beating the war drums. That distinguished dove, William Sloane Coffin, returned from wherever he's been to announce that God wants us to fight. In the general media, Anthony Lewis wrote column after column explaining why American honor required us to take up arms. Anna Quindlen, the universal monitor of social sensitivity, urged that a little bombing and strafing was the least that we could do.

And so it went in the debate over Bosnian policy; hawks were doves and doves were hawks. Why was it that those who made their mark as critics of the Vietnam war and who have been instructing us for years that America cannot be the policeman of the world were so eager for strong military action in the Balkans? A number of reasons suggest themselves, some more plausible than others. The fact that the national interest of the United States was not involved may have been viewed as a plus. Altruistic wars that are not "tainted" by American national interest are thereby made morally attractive. Or maybe those beating the drums wanted their President, burdened by his draft evasion, to show that he could be as tough as Presidents past. Or maybe it was the Muslim factor. How better for Christians to show their purity of intent than by backing Muslims against Christians? It was also a positive factor for those who don't like Christians very much.

A more sinister explanation that has been floated is that the proponents of war knew that the Balkans would be, like Vietnam, a quagmire. U.S. military involvement would quickly resurrect "the peace movement" and we would all be back in the glory years of the 1960s, the years that Bill Coffin, Tony Lewis, and others have never left. One should put

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

little credit in this last explanation. It requires that the war proponents had two thoughts in their mind at the same time: getting the U.S. to intervene and then leading the protest against U.S. intervention. These are one-thought-at-a-time people. The one thought, we expect, is that it would make us feel very good to engage in an eleemosynary war driven by no interest other than being on the side of Muslim underdogs oppressed by hegemonic Christians. It is a thought no more persuasive than their earlier and simplistic one thought that the U.S. should not be policeman of the world. The next time the U.S. intervenes where its national interest is engaged, do not be surprised by the vigorous protest against U.S. warmongering from those who did not get their war in the Balkans.

FT

THE NOVAK ACHIEVEMENT

Paul Johnson, the British journalist-historian, recently wrote that Michael Novak has probably done more than anybody since Adam Smith to advance the moral case for market economies. Rivals to that claim do not come readily to mind. Novak's 1982 book *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* has long been the object of spirited debate, both admiring and disdainful. But nobody doubted that he had broken new ground and made an argument that could not be ignored. His contention was that capitalism is not just an economic system but an order within which culture, politics, and economics form a triad of "political economy" that is one of the great achievements of humankind and is best exemplified in the American republican experiment. That basic "triune" understanding of our public order is today more and more embraced by other writers—writers who frequently cannot bring themselves to acknowledge their debt to Michael Novak.

Even some of Novak's friends were uneasy about aspects of the 1982 book. To try to rehabilitate morally the term "capitalism," they thought, was both futile and unnecessary. Calling it "democratic capitalism" helped, but not enough. To praise capitalism in any form was an in-your-face affront to almost the entirety of intellectual establishments in the West, religious and otherwise. After the collapse of communism, however, capitalism was the only thing left standing and it offered a powerful appeal to those trying to rebuild post-Communist societies. People like Novak, Peter Berger, and a few others had laid the intellectual and moral groundwork for the embrace of capitalism with moral integrity.

Novak understood from the start that part of his task was the rehabilitation of Adam Smith. Contrary to the stereotype promulgated by socialists, Smith was first and foremost a moral philosopher. Throughout Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, the assumptions were one with his massive *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. The "invisible hand," a minor image in Smith, was not autonomous. Economics was and is, above all, about behavior, moral and immoral. This reading of Smith is also evident in James Q. Wilson's new book, *The Moral Sense* (Free Press), and is in no way idiosyncratic with Novak, as anyone who has ever read *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* well knows.

Friendly critics of Novak have also fretted that he seems often to reach too quickly from the cultural-economic-political to the explicitly theological. The treatment of analogies between the triune order of democratic capitalism and the life of the Holy Trinity proposed in *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* seems to many to be, well, reaching. Yet, this too testified to the boldness of Novak's project. In the last ten years he has persisted in advancing and refining the argument of democratic capitalism, and now we have an important new work, *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Free Press).

Those with only a slight familiarity with the interminable debates over Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (meaning the Calvinist ethic) will readily see what Novak is up to in this new work. Again, we have an audacious but well-documented and vigorously argued work. Novak does not hesitate to admit that there is a great deal of historical evidence suggesting a peculiar connection between the Protestant ethic and capitalism. Writing in sympathetic conversation with Weber, Novak points out that there is also a good deal of counterevidence that Weber did not take into account. In addition, and more important, there have been important developments in Catholic teaching and social behavior over the past century.

Critics will say—they have already said—that Novak is trying to hijack Catholic social teaching to advance his version of democratic capitalism. Any fair reading of *The Catholic Ethic* decisively puts that criticism to rest. Anyone trying to hijack Catholic teaching for such purposes will find that popes from Leo XIII to John Paul II got there first. These developments came to a head in the 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus* in which the Pope proposed for Eastern Europe and the Third World "a business economy, a market economy, or simply free economy" as a model to be followed. As John Paul makes unmistakably clear, this is not first of all an economic argument in any narrow sense of the term. It is an anthropological and theological argument about the "creative subjectivity" of workers and of society, and about the freedom that is necessary for such creative subjectivity to flourish.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is no secret that John Paul has read Novak's work. Those who worked closely with the Pope on the encyclical can testify to the influence of Novak's thought on critical passages. This does not mean that *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, or any other Novak writings, bears a papal imprimatur. It does mean beyond cavil that Michael Novak has contributed significantly to the development of Catholic social doctrine at the highest level of its teaching authority. Those who take on the task of writing about Catholic social teaching have compelling reasons to address Novak's project with greater seriousness.

When a thinker comes along with arguments that undermine so many conventional assumptions with which people have become comfortable over a long time, dismissiveness and virulent opposition are to be expected. Novak is a disruptive factor in the comfortable cognitive worlds of Catholic, and much Protestant, thought about politics, culture, and economics. Many Christian writers on economics have not yet been weaned from their Marxist beginnings. Of course most of them today are inclined, for understandable reasons, to insist adamantly that they are not Marxists. Yet the same thinkers commonly add, at least in a footnote, that they employ "Marxist analysis" and look forward to some kind of "socialism with a human face."

The Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and a host of others no longer being credible models, there is today a marked fascination with the German model of the "social market." But what is still under attack is American "exceptionalism"—an exceptionalism traced by Novak and others through the Founders' understanding of the necessary interaction of religion, politics, and economics. That understanding was most famously celebrated by Tocqueville. It may be tedious to do so, but the obvious must be plainly set forth: Politically, culturally, and economically the German experience is dramatically different from the American experiment on a dozen scores, most of which will suggest themselves to the reader's mind upon only a little reflection.

Novak is derided by his critics as an uncritical celebrant of the American experiment. There is no denying that he is enthusiastic about what the Founders called a *novus ordo seclorum*, a new order for the ages. And even his closest friends wince on occasion when he lets himself get carried away rhetorically. Anyone who reads *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, however, must recognize that, far from being uncritical, Novak evinces an intense and well-informed sense about where the American experiment has gone wrong and is going wrong—from race relations, to the urban underclass, to crime, and the debasement of popular culture.

Novak's is an intellectual project that, persistently prosecuted, has already left a strong historical mark. It is belittled by those who subscribe to the juvenile maxim, "It's the economy, stupid." The Marxoid assumption that the economy is *the* variable in the ordering of public life—together with the language of class warfare and redistribution of wealth—is still firmly established among leftists now in high political position. Against this, Novak stubbornly and convincingly contends that the Founders got it right, that Smith got it right, that Tocqueville got it right, and we—who live in a moment in which their arguments have been so stunningly vindicated by history—can still get it right.

Finally, *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* must be viewed in the light of the earlier project of the late John Courtney Murray. Sometimes Father Murray seemed to be whimsical about it, but at other times he was dead earnest in suggesting that a day might come when the proponents of the founding and defining Protestant tradition of the American experiment may, for complex reasons, tire of the experiment or turn against it. Then, said Murray, it might be up to Catholics to provide a moral and theological rationale for the constitutional order of a free society. That time may have come. And of course it is not up to Catholics alone. But Michael Novak's most recent book demonstrates that he, for one, is not shying away from the charge given all of us by Father Murray.

FT

Expendable Lives

Ronald Dworkin's book this year received generally respectful attention in the general media. It is called *Life's Dominion: An Argument About Abortion, Euthanasia, and Individual Freedom* (Knopf). It came in for very sharp, and insightful, criticism, however, in, of all places, the *Washington Post*. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese of Emory University is not taken in by Dworkin's argument that abortion finally is a religious question, and therefore the constitutional protection of religious freedom means that everybody should be able to do what they want. Fox-Genovese writes, "For although the Constitution prohibits the establishment of specific churches and prescribes a tolerance for different faiths, it presupposes a fundamental Christian ethic and does not leave matters of life and death to the private judgment of individuals." She is right about the Constitution, of course, but not about the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution. In decisions from *Roe* through *Casey*, the Court has precisely left matters of life and death to the private judgment of individuals.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fox-Genovese continues: "By linking abortion and euthanasia, Dworkin effectively, if inadvertently, labels expendable all forms of life that are not, in his judgment, truly life. He thereby limits true life to those of us who have some claim to realize the dream of autonomous individualism. . . . In our time, the social costs of supporting human life in various stages and forms have become formidable and continue to rise. For all Dworkin's intellectual elegance and flashes of humanity, he ultimately offers the 'autonomous' members of the middle class a comforting rationale for serving our own interests while continuing to feel that we are good people.

"The problem of costs will not go away and may yet force some hard choices, although the choices are unlikely to be acceptable if they do not apply equally to all citizens, whatever their personal and economic inequalities. But those choices must be discussed forthrightly on their own painful terms, not disguised as higher truths. For beyond the problem of costs lies the larger problem of morality—of how we imagine the best of ourselves as a people. Which of us, without an extraordinary exercise of pride, can claim to know what is best for ourselves, much less for others? How can we be sure that caring for a handicapped child or a terminally ill relative will not force us to cultivate strengths we did not know we possessed? How can we be sure that the power to decide who should die will not corrode our very conception of morality? The power to make unacceptable choices exposes the dark side of individualism—the presumption that we can safely predict the consequences of our acts. Not for nothing do the folk cultures of the world abound with stories like that of the fisherman's wife who was accorded three wishes—and had to use the third to undo the other two."

FT

Intimidation By (Nonexistent) Law

Jerome Kurtz is not just one among many who were upset when the Archdiocese and the Christian Coalition distributed guidelines in the New York school elections this spring. Mr. Kurtz is Professor of Law at New York University and the former Commissioner of Internal Revenue. In a most threatening letter to the *New York Times* he writes, "The law could not be more explicit nor more absolute. If a religious organization wishes to have a tax exemption, it must stay out of election campaigns. If it wishes to electioneer, it may not have a tax exemption."

The law, in fact, applies not only to religious organizations but to charitable organizations of a maddeningly wide variety. Further, the law in no way prevents any of these organizations from engaging in voter education efforts, so long as they do not endorse candidates. (Endorsing candidates is presumably what Mr. Kurtz means by "electioneering." The Archdiocese and Christian Coalition were very careful not to do that.) Mr. Kurtz, as is usual in these discussions, makes no complaint about black churches that are much more overtly political, nor about other religious organizations on the left that frequently come much closer to "electioneering." No, the alarm goes off when Catholics and those awful "fundamentalists" get involved.

Kurtz concludes with this: "The Internal Revenue Service is charged with the responsibility to see that the tax laws are complied with. It alone can grant or deny tax exemptions (subject to judicial review). It alone can assure all taxpayers that the others are complying with the law. It should do so." It is a comfort to know that Mr. Kurtz is no longer commissioner of IRS. It is troubling to recall that he was (under Jimmy Carter), and that he is now peddling his gross misconstrual of the law to tomorrow's lawyers. More troubling is the fact that churches, Protestant and Catholic, are easily and often intimidated by rumblings such as those emitted by Mr. Kurtz.

And churches are intimidated, to the point of gagging themselves, by their own lawyers who fret about the loss of tax exemption. To lose tax exemption is a serious thing; to stifle the public voice of religion is much more serious. Happily, tax-exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the tax code—whether they be churches or humane societies—are free to be as public as they want to be about whatever concerns them, no matter how controversial or "political" the subject. What they cannot do as institutions is to endorse or campaign for specific candidates. (Although individuals, including individual clergy, can do that as well.) It is a perfectly tolerable restriction. But if Mr. Kurtz and those who think like him had their way, the restrictions would be intolerable—at least for religious groups advancing views that meet with their disapproval.

FT

The Fires of Religious Persecution

We haven't said much about the Waco disaster. By the time this appears, there may be an official report or two. We'd like to be wrong, but we expect they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will whitewash the unspeakable malfeasance of government officials from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) to the White House. Attorney General Janet Reno declared that there "will be no recriminations." There should be recriminations aplenty.

Now we have tapes of the conversations between David Koresh and the ATF. He makes clear that they could have arrested him any day while he was jogging outside the compound. Among other concerns of this alleged child-abuser was a demand that a trust fund be set up for the Branch Davidian children: "That's one thing I'm going to be hard-nosed about." Maybe he was buying a lot of guns (perfectly legal in Texas) and making them more automatic (perfectly common in Texas), but the government gave him and his people every reason to believe that they were under attack. After the inferno that burned up more than sixty men, women, and children, a Waco resident carried a sign: "Is Your Church Approved by the ATF?"

Even if (we will probably never know for sure) the Davidians actually set the final fire, the government bears responsibility for those killings. Dealing with a man whom they knew was consumed with the Apocalypse, they deliberately created a situation that the Davidians could not have seen as anything but apocalyptic. The FBI and media made much of the expertise of the FBI "hostage team," ignoring the manifest truth that these people were not being held hostage. However wrongheaded we may think them, they were willing, indeed passionate, followers of David Koresh. But how about the children, were they willing? Creating the circumstance in which they were burned to death is a strange way of saving the children about whom Ms. Reno expressed such touching concern.

We will await the reports from the official investigations, and maybe they will compel a different judgment. But as matters now stand, the government attack on the Branch Davidians is among the most blatant and costly instances of state persecution of religion in American history.

FT

While We're At It

■ Now here's an ambitious program. It's a conference in Washington titled "Future of the American Church: From Impasse to Opportunity; Listening to the Voice of the Whole Church." It is sponsored by the National Center for Pastoral Leadership with assistance from some of the major Catholic academic centers in the country—Fordham, Georgetown, Villanova, Notre Dame, &c. If you're a Catholic and wanted to "listen to the voice of the whole Church," the organizers should explain to you, "Honey, we shrunk the Church." Major speakers include Episcopal Bishop Jane Dixon on gender issues; Rosemary R. Ruether on "towards a more democratic church," one in which, presumably, her doctrine that Christ is but one of many Christ figures (and not necessarily the most impressive) will be cheerfully embraced; Fr. Charles Curran, who has been censured by Rome for his deviations in moral theology; and Letty Russell, a Protestant and self-declared radical feminist. It is a big conference with dozens of other featured speakers, most of whom are outspoken critics of the Church's teaching office. There is not one speaker noted for his or her support for the Magisterium or the pontificate of John Paul II. Not one. Yet here, we are told, is the "Voice of the Whole Church." You can count on it: a charge that will frequently be made at the conference is that Rome arrogantly presumes to speak for the whole Church. If we are to judge by the organization of this conference, Rome and bishops and theologians loyal to Rome are not even part of "the whole Church."

■ *The Great Melody* (University of Chicago Press) by Conor Cruise O'Brien is a "thematic biography" of Edmund Burke and is a fine read despite the fact that at least half the text should have been consigned to footnotes, being, for the most part, insider disputes with other biographers of Burke. What makes it a fine read is that O'Brien wisely lets Burke speak often and at length. What public figure, then or since, has been so eloquent, so prescient, so persistent in devotion to truth? Few candidates come to mind. From the beginning, long before the Great Terror, Burke understood the bloody madness of the French Revolution. When the Directory was established there was an effort to soften what today would be called the revolution's "image." Burke was not buying: "But, after all, for what purpose are we told of this reformation in their principles, and what is the policy of all this softening in ours, which is to be produced by their example? It is not to soften us to suffering innocence and virtue, but to mollify us to the crimes and to the society of robbers and ruffians. But I trust that our countrymen will not be softened to that kind of crimes and criminals; for if we should, our hearts will be hardened to everything which has a claim on our benevolence. A kind Providence has placed in our breasts a hatred of the unjust and cruel, in order that we may preserve ourselves from cruelty and injustice. They who bear cruelty are accomplices in it. The pretended gentleness which excludes that charitable rancor produces an indifference which is half an approbation. They never will love where they ought to love who do not hate where they ought to hate."

■ The European "invasion" of the Americas did

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

awful things to native religion, according to Rosemary Radford Ruether. The Mexicans had a very nice god called Quetzalcoatl, "the mysterious Christlike figure of indigenous tradition." But his image was distorted by the Aztec god of human sacrifice, Huitzilopochtli. "The Spanish, on the other hand, brought with them a god they claimed to be Christian but who was much more a warlord god of violence and human sacrifice." If we are to believe this new history, the Spanish ritually slaughtered tens of thousands of innocents on their altars, just like the devotees of bad old Huitzilopochtli. Ruether concludes: "The true struggle of religion in the sixteenth century and still today is not between the true god of the Bible and 'paganism' but between the warlord gods of human sacrifice in both religions and the god of life who calls for compassion and mutual respect between peoples, a god revealed in Christ but also known in Quetzalcoatl." As Jesus did not say, you can tell the good gods from the bad ones by whether or not they are, well, nice.

■ The poor Copts. At one time more than a tenth of the Egyptian population, Coptic Christians have been getting out as fast as they can. But millions remain under conditions of severe persecution. They have no lobby anywhere. Certainly Christians here remain blithely ignorant of what is happening in Egypt, and in the Sudan. But there is a Coptic Association and they put out an informative newsletter called, sensibly enough, *The Copts*. To get a copy, write P.O. Box 9119, Jersey City, NJ 07304.

■ At least to some people, President Clinton's appointments do not make his administration, as he puts it, "look like America." The following is from *Insight*, the newsletter of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). "During his presidential campaign, Bill Clinton promised that his Cabinet 'would look like America.' Is there a blind spot here? Pollsters regularly report that evangelicals represent 20 percent of the nation's population. Yet, to our knowledge, not one self-identified evangelical, or even someone sympathetic to our traditional values, has been apppointed to his nineteen-member Cabinet. Nor have we yet seen any self-professed evangelical Christian within the entire White House staff willing, shall we say, to 'come out of the closet.'"

The NAE newsletter continues: "The liberal *Washington Monthly* magazine provided an explanation in its cover story 'Is the Religious Right All Wrong?' Subtitled 'Extremists grab the headlines, but America's evangelicals have a message we all need to hear,' author John Meacham's article notes hostility to evangelical values. He says: 'Even Clinton worries about protecting his liberal credentials. He did hold one meeting with ministers in Little Rock during the transition, and Billy Graham gave the benediction at the inauguration. But when the five-million-member National Association of Evangelicals, as moderate a part of the Religious Right as there is, invited Clinton to speak to its national convention in March, the President didn't acknowledge the invitation.' Transition team member the Rev. Benjamin Chavis, a former vice-president of the National Council of Churches [and now head of the NAACP], explained why with one word. 'Irrelevancy. . . . It's not because anyone is shutting the door in their face, but because their ideology increasingly does not apply to the American condition.' America beyond sin, righteousness, and judgment? God's Word irrelevant? We beg to differ."

■ Stanley Hoffmann, a Harvard professor in the front ranks of the world unitarians of our time, reviews Tzvetan Todorov's *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought* (Harvard University Press).The review ends on a melancholy note: "Todorov's voice is the reasonable voice of the cosmopolitan exile. It is a voice that, so far, the screams of nationalist, xenophobic, and racialist prejudice often succeed in drowning out. Still, at the end of the day, when the atrocities in Bosnia and elsewhere make one despair of human perfectibility, of moderation, of a universal moral law based on reason, reading so fine, learned, and humane a book is, if not a consolation, at least a relief. Why are there so few Todorovs among the intellectuals of today?" Might the reason be that belief in human perfectibility has taken so many hard knocks over the last several thousand years? Just a thought, at the end of the day.

Sources: "The Gay Movement," cover story in *The Nation*, May 3, 1993; article "Out and Organized" in the Sunday "Styles of the Times" section, *New York Times*, June 13, 1993. Garry Wills on America and Iraq, *New York Post*, June 25, 1993. Philip Gourevitch on the Holocaust Museum, *Harper's*, July 1993. Review of *Life's Dominion*, *Washington Post*, June 6, 1993. Jerome Kurtz on "electioneering" by religious groups, *New York Times*, May 17, 1993. On Davidian tapes, *The New Republic*, June 21, 1993.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: Rosemary Radford Ruether on the European "invasion" of the Americas, *National Catholic Reporter*, June 18, 1993. On Clinton administration and Evangelicals, *Insight*, June 1993. Stanley Hoffmann on Tzvetan Todorov in *The New Republic*, July 12, 1993.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In a Dark Country Night

I see one bumblebee heading
over the fence and into the doorway
of this shrunken Old Field's Baptist Church.
The trees are tagged with signs
of modern advancement: KEEP OUT,
BAD DOGS, as out of the big house
comes a white-haired man saying
he's Harry Smith, maker of this
miniature, and everything is copacetic
if I want to take a look.
Just be sure to keep *him*
in my story.

The real church has vanished
from the hill but here's a six-foot-long
god-house that Harry Smith built
in his livingroom before turning it
out to winter.

The steeple strung with Christmas lights
soars in Wonderland proportions
over the roof's peeling coat of red
as I stoop for the peepshow,
four-inch pews are scattered like chance
into a sanctuary;
wasps with wafer-thin wings
fly before cellophaned windows,
the altar lit in a dusky, underwater blue.

No parishioners puzzle in a stain
of sunlight. This church
is cleansed of people,
of all but the ceremony of cutting,
the ritual of nailing
disappearance into place.

That night the big church came down,
it must have spread its cloistered parts
like stars in a dark country night
till Harry took charge and planted
in his yard what anyone will remember
of Old Field's Baptist Church.

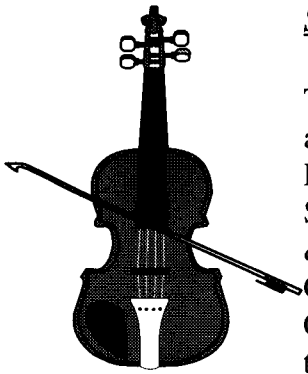
I'm on my knees
and he's still saying r*emember me,*
holding out his photo
of the first, the big and the real
one. So, in the language of installation,
I commit Harry and his church,
hatched in a house, to shine
as blue as bedside stars over Old Field's.
A far clock chimes in mid-summer.
It's midday.

Katherine Soniat

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ENCORE PERFORMANCES

Back-issue classics from FIRST THINGS



Scores of fascinating topics

The Christian Intellectual Tradition...Women, Ordination, and Angels...Walker Percy and the Christian Scandal...The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Transcendental Subject... Sex and the Single Life...Dr. Death Speaks...The Capitalism & Morality Debate...Religion & the Life of Learning...The Grammar of Baptism...The Decline and Fall of the Christian College...The Constitution and the Erotic Self...Poverty & the Victim Ploy...Bioethics & the Holocaust...An Anatomy of Sexual Ethics...What I Saw at the Academy of Religion...Animal Rights, Human Rights...Abortion: What Americans Really Think About It...The Achievement of Jaroslav Pelikan...Natural Law and the Constitution...Caring About Women, Caring for the Unborn...A Primer on the Devil...What Should We Do About the Poor?... Can Notre Dame Be Saved?...The Disputed Legacy of Reinhold Niebuhr...Two Paths to Black Power...Historians and the Reality of Christ...St. Evelyn Waugh

Extraordinary compositions by today's top thinkers and writers

Paul Johnson...Mary Ann Glendon...Richard John Neuhaus...Glenn C. Loury... Michael Novak...Gertrude Himmelfarb...George Weigel...James Nuechterlein...David Novak...Max L. Stackhouse...Midge Decter...Peter L Berger... Leon R. Kass...Wolfhart Pannenberg...Matthew Berke...Mark A. Noll...Stanley Hauerwas...John P. Sisk...Avery Dulles...Phillip E. Johnson...Elizabeth Kristol...Hadley Arkes... George M. Marsden...David Singer...Paul V. Mankowski...Gilbert Meilaender...Thomas S. Derr

Return this coupon for a free catalog of classic* FIRST THINGS *back issues

YES...send me your free catalog of back-issue classics!

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ STATE_____ ZIP_____

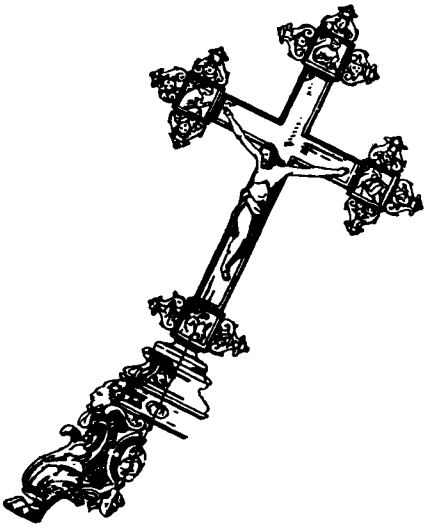
FT1093

FIRST THINGS Readers Service, 129 Phelps Ave., Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108

Inventory is limited, so mail this coupon today!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Are Catholics Christians?



Yes, of course! Catholics are the original Christians. The Catholic Church was founded by Jesus on the Rock who was Peter. But not every Catholic lives the full Christian life.

It's painful to note that there are Catholics who are biblically illiterate, who would sooner play bingo than pray, and who replace Jesus with Mary. No wonder the Second Vatican Council was necessary!

But the Council unwittingly allowed other distortions to creep into the Church: moral permissiveness and a reduction of Christianity to "being nice" and political correctness.

We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are, in union with the Pope, contending for a more authentically Christian Catholicism. And, as befits a magazine rooted in the rich heritage of Catholic intellectuality, we do so with reason and erudition. As Berkeley's John T. Noonan Jr. says, we "embody the vital central Catholic intellectual tradition."

An ecumenically-minded Catholic monthly, we probe the wisdom offered not only by the Bible but also by such giants as Augustine, Aquinas, Dante, Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Auden, Eliot, Maritain, Thomas More, Dorothy Day, C.S. Lewis, Flannery O'Connor, and John Henry Newman of the 19th-century Oxford Movement in England, from which our magazine takes its name. We also scrutinize a wide range of contemporary issues, including the quest for a more just and humane world, but refuse to subordinate religion to political ideology.

For George Will, the REVIEW is "splendid," to Annie Dillard "a terrific magazine I've long admired." We've been hailed by Bernard Cardinal Law as "excellent," by *National Review* as "first-rate," by *Library Journal* as "brilliant," and by Christopher Derrick, England's foremost Catholic apologist, as "by far the best Catholic magazine in the English-speaking world." Frankly, we're "influential," to quote the *Los Angeles Times*.

Many of the finest Catholic and non-Catholic thinkers have appeared in our pages: Walker Percy, Robert Bellah, John Lukacs, Christopher Lasch, Henri Nouwen, Avery Dulles, Robert Coles, Jean Bethke Elshtain, George Kennan, Sheldon Vanauken, Ronda Chervin.

We can't promise you'll agree with us on every issue, but if you yearn for a soulful, intelligent, Christocentric, and nontrendy exploration of the sacred in our midst, we invite you, Catholic or not, to get to know us.

(Please allow 2 to 8 weeks for delivery of first issue)

SPECIAL DISCOUNT RATES FOR FIRST-TIME SUBSCRIBERS

- ☐ One-year subscription. . . . . .$14 (regularly $19)
- ☐ One-year student, unemployed, or retired person's subscription . . . . . .$12 (regularly $16)
- ☐ Two-year subscription . . . . .$23 (regularly $35)
- ☐ One-year non-U.S. subscription . . . . . US$24 (regularly $29) Payment must be drawn in U.S. Dollars
- ☐ Sample copy. $3.50

Send coupon or letter. Make check payable to NEW OXFORD REVIEW. Mail to:

NEW OXFORD REVIEW
Room 370
1069 Kains Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94706

NAME (Please print or type)

STREET ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP CODE

PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Great Teachers from Notre Dame!"

YES, these are the video and audio courses you've heard about! Picture yourself face to face with a great teacher again. Imagine throwing open a window for your mind and spirit, taking an adventure with an exciting, engaging companion. Outstanding professors from the University of Notre Dame have prepared this special series so that you can sit down with them *right now*, completely at your own convenience.

Each program comes with a handsomely bound, high-quality set of video or audio tapes, appropriate books and a course guide to the materials. Don't spend another minute regretting the obstacles that keep you from everything that a great university can offer. Bring a great teacher home today!

FREE PREVIEW OPPORTUNITY!

Use the tear-off form below to order, or call our toll-free number any time. If you're not sure which program to order, check the box on the form below (or ask the operator) to receive a *free audiotape* featuring samples from each program.

PASCAL AND THE MEANING OF LIFE
PROFESSOR THOMAS MORRIS

Ever wish you understood the meaning of life? So did Blaise Pascal. A superb 17th century scientist, Pascal gave us the first calculating machine, first theory of probability and first system of public transportation. At age 31, internationally famous, he experienced a startling conversion of life. From then until his death, he probed the alternatives we face as we try to answer (or avoid!) ultimate questions. Tom Morris will introduce you to Pascal's famous *Pensées* — provocative, eloquent, urgent, deeply personal. Why should anyone wager that there is a God? What is it that really drives the human heart? Get some unexpected and intriguing answers here. (Four lectures on video plus text of Pascal's *Pensées.)*

Tom Morris has electrified student audiences ever since he took his Ph.D from Yale and started lecturing at Notre Dame in 1981. Winner of numerous teaching awards and honors, Tom has been featured on The Learning Channel and speaks to rave reviews from adult audiences across the country.

DANTE AND AQUINAS: THE ROAD TO PARADISE
PROFESSOR RALPH MCINERNY

What did the cosmos look like to the two greatest geniuses of the Middle Ages? St. Thomas Aquinas, a theologian, took on the difficult task of relating Christian thought to the works of ancient Greek philosophers. Dante, a poet inspired and informed by Aquinas, shaped history's most powerful vision of the human condition in *The Divine Comedy,* a journey through Heaven, Hell and Purgatory. Walk with Ralph McInerny as he explores the medieval world, the ideas of Aquinas and the incomparable poetry of Dante. He guarantees that you will come back from Paradise a different person. (Ten lectures on audiotape plus text of Dante's *Divine Comedy.*)

Ralph McInerny is the Grace Professor of Medieval Philosophy and Director of the Jacques Maritain Center. At Notre Dame since 1955, he is perhaps as well known for his "Father Dowling" mysteries as for his prolific scholarship and sparkling teaching.

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT
PROFESSOR WALTER F. "JACK" PRATT, JR.

In the summer of 1787, a remarkable collection of statesmen launched the greatest free deliberation about self-government in history. Delegates to the Constitutional Convention had to forge a new government for a fragmented and suspicious group of former colonies. Jack Pratt recalls who these men were, what divided them and what ultimately brought them together. Then he explores five great Supreme Court decisions involving the Constitution. What was at stake in each crisis, and why did the justices rule as they did? Come to grips here with the essence of our political experience. (Ten lectures on audiotape, plus text of *The Federalist Papers.*)

Jack Pratt, Associate Dean of the Law School, holds his D.Phil in Politics from Oxford and his J.D. from Yale. In 1978-79, he was Law Clerk to Chief Justice Warren E. Burger. His talks on the Constitution have drawn the highest ratings from alumni at Elderhostel programs on campus.

IMAGES OF MAN IN SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES
PROFESSOR PAUL RATHBURN

Shakespeare has never failed to move anyone who came to him and listened. In his major tragedies – *Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth* and *Lear* – the greatest dramatist and poet in our language holds up a mirror to what is mysterious and uncontrollable in our lives. Paul Rathburn will help you see into that mirror — into Shakespeare's unforgettable visions of youth, passion, ambition and old age. Some have thought that these visions simply end in darkness and lack of meaning. Paul proposes that Shakespeare is never that simple, that he wrestled to the end with issues of fate and flawed humanity. (Four lectures on video tape plus a text of the four plays.)

Professor Rathburn holds degrees in Theology and English and has won a Sheedy Award for outstanding teaching. An expert on filmed versions of Shakespeare's plays, he offers invaluable advice on the films that present the Bard's work at its most powerful.

✓	COURSE	BOOK
	Pascal and the Meaning of Life	Pascal's *Pensées*
	Constitution and People Who Made It	*Federalist Papers & Constitution*
	Dante and Aquinas: Road to Paradise	*The Divine Comedy*
	Images of Man in Shakespeare's Tragedies	*The Great Tragedies*

$94.00 First Course and Book
_____ + ___ Courses @ $79.00 each
_____ = Total for Courses and Books
$4.50 + Add $4.50 for Shipping/Handling
_____ = Total Amount Remitted

❍ Enclosed is my check
❍ Please charge my credit card:
❑ Amex ❑ VISA ❑ M/C
Card # _____
Expiration Date ____/____
Signature _____

TO ORDER:
CALL TOLL FREE 800-955-8118, EXT. 20

Or mail this form (and make check payable) to **Great Teachers Series, Customer Service Center, 1681 Glens Drive, Florence, KY 41042.** The cost of your *first* course is $94.00. Order *additional* courses for only $79.00 each.

❑ Please send me a free audio tape sampler of all the programs in the series.

Name _____
Address _____
City State Zip

FTAA01

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED